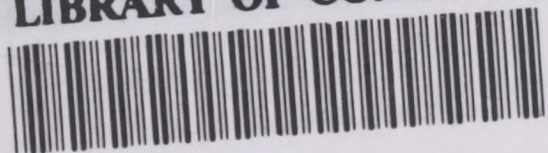


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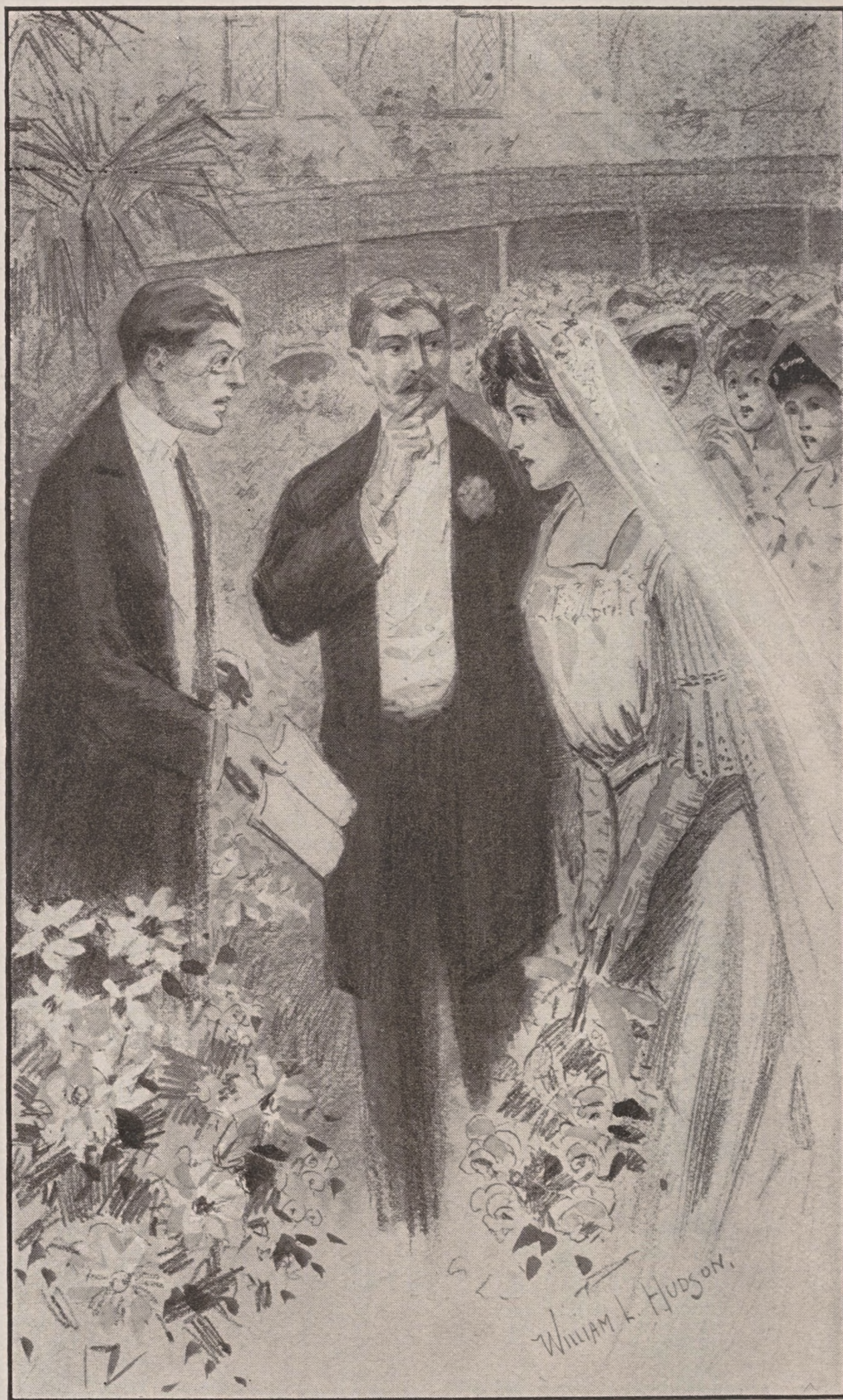


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“I WILL NOT!”

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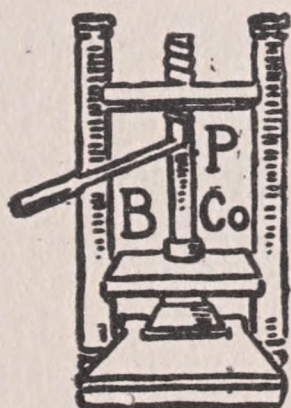
The Christman

BY

Dwight Edwards Marvin

AUTHOR OF

"The Work of the Harksborough Committee"

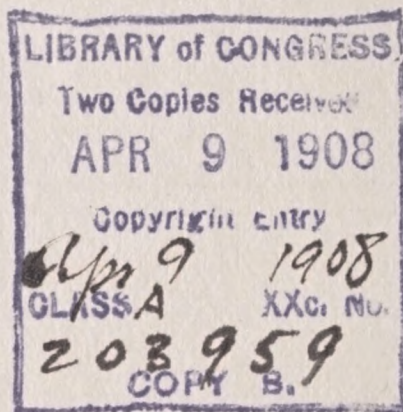


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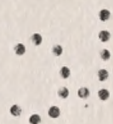


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GR. Apr. 14, 08

To
My WIFE

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THE CHRISTMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE PEACEMAKER.

"Please set it over there, Mr. Hazzard," said Mrs. Rhyder, as she leaned her head on one side, to see what effect the replacing of a large potted plant would have on the general arrangements of pulpit decorations.

The young man who had been addressed lifted the plant to the place indicated and looked up for approval.

"A little further back," she ordered. "There, that will do."

"Mrs. Rhyder, don't you think that it would be better to have the desk removed?" asked a young woman who was arranging some flowers on a small table. "We could make everything look so much prettier without it——"

"No, that would never do," broke in Mrs. Gaddis, a tall woman with pronounced features. "The new minister might need it; besides, the parsons who are coming to install him may want a place to put their sermons and things. I can't see, for the life of me, why a man called of the Lord should use a pulpit. This popping up from behind a desk is too much like a corpse sitting bolt upright at a funeral, or a Jack in the box. Pulpiteering is, to my mind, the next thing to denying the Lord."

"They tell me that Mr. Osborn uses a manuscript," remarked Mr. Hazzard, "so I suppose he'll want some sort of a desk."

"Well, I can't help it," returned Mrs. Gaddis. "He may use what he likes, but reading isn't preaching just the same, and you can never make it so, any more than you can make sand into sugar by sweetening it."

"We can easily arrange the plants and flowers on both sides of the platform so as to look even," said Mrs. Rhyder, "and leave plenty of room for the ministers. Seldon! won't you please move the desk a little, so that we can bank up the flowers in front?"

The sexton took hold of the desk and, by a series of jerks, drew it back as he was ordered.

Just at that moment a bald-headed man came forward with a large basket of greens and placed them on the front seat. He had evidently heard the conversation, for he turned to Mrs. Gaddis with a bright smile, and said:

"I wasn't at home the Sunday that Mr. Osborn preached, but Miss Clevering tells me that he is a godly young man. If that is so I shall be satisfied, whether he uses a manuscript or notes, or speaks offhand. You know they say that ministers always have three heads to their sermons, and that, if you watch closely enough, you can tell what they are, even when they are not announced. I never paid particular attention to the matter, but there is a sense in which every pulpit address is divided into three parts, or ought to be; the first is the study part, where the preacher meets God and learns His will; the second is the parish part, where he meets experiences and learns the needs of the people, and the third is the church part, where he meets immortal souls and gives to them a divine message. Talk about proclaiming the Gospel, why no man living can do that

by simply reading well-written manuscripts or making pious speeches. Personality has a great deal more to do with it than scholarship or oratory. A minister's business is to win men to God, and he can't do that without having a winning personality. Mark my word, if Mr. Osborn is a godly man, we'll all learn to love him. Miss Clevering, I think that if you and Mrs. Rhyder would mat more greens around those flower pots and cover them, it would look better."

Miss Clevering gathered up some leaves and, pressing them about the bare earthenware, asked, "How's that, Mr. Hartwell?"

The man who had just spoken expressed his approval, and she turned and inquired of Mrs. Rhyder whether Mr. Crouch understood that he was to drive over to Cranston the next day and meet the new minister and his mother.

"You better believe I did," came an answer from the church entrance.

Every one turned and saw Mr. Crouch himself standing in the doorway. He had on an old felt hat and was chewing the end of an unlit cigar. Noticing that he was the center of

observation, he removed his hat and walked down the aisle.

"I always have respect for the cloth when I find that it's genuine," he asserted, as he drew his cigar from his mouth. "They tell me that this here specimen that we're going to have is fresh from the factory and all right. Ha! ha! I wouldn't miss the first pull on him for anything. It won't take me long to find out whether he's full breadth or single, or whether he's cotton or wool. I reckon he'll turn out to be shoddy. Ha! ha! ha! Made up of theological rag tag and clay and all that sort of thing, and as narrow as welting. Ha! ha! ha! See if it isn't so. I won't be a mile on my way back before I find out what he's good for. Sister Gaddis, I understand that you're going to keep and feed them both. Shall I drive them around to your house first before I show them the parsonage?"

The question evidently annoyed the person to whom it was addressed, for she frowned and then glanced toward Mr. Hartwell.

"Yes, and if I'm not at home," she answered, "just you step around to the back and rap on the window. Phoebe will let you in."

"I got kind o' used to ministers," she explained to Mr. Hartwell, in a low tone of voice. "Pa always kept open house for 'em, as you might say, and I never want to go back on Pa's training. Besides, most folks don't know how to get along with 'em. They think that they've got to dress up and be trim and stiff. Children are most generally afraid of 'em. The way to treat 'em is to act natural. Say what you think."

"I understood that Mrs. Treadwell was expecting to entertain our new pastor," he remarked. "I am sure that she told me so, but I presume that you have arranged with her, so that it will be all right."

"No, I haven't arranged with her or anybody else," Mrs. Gaddis returned. "I just thought that, as I was all ready, I might as well do it. It won't make any difference. Folks that want to feed him will have chances enough."

Mr. Hartwell said nothing more, but in a few moments left the church, going directly to Mrs. Treadwell's house; he communicated to her the information that he had received.

She gazed at him in astonishment and then bit her lips in suppressed anger.

"Leonora! Leonora!" she called.

Her daughter came directly from the kitchen, wearing a blue-checked apron. Pausing in the doorway, she folded her bare arms and waited for her mother to speak.

"What do you think of this?" Mrs. Treadwell asked. "After all the cooking that we've done, and all the preparations that we've made, Anna Gaddis says that she's going to have the new minister and his mother at her house, and I put in my invitation two weeks ago."

Turning to Mr. Hartwell, she added, "I wonder who's going to have the say about it?"

"I rather think that there will be two people that will have the say," he returned. "One is Mrs. Treadwell's natural self, and the other is Mrs. Treadwell's better self; and after thinking it all over, it will be Mrs. Treadwell's better self that will win the day. Don't you think so?"

She tossed her head in reply, and, looking at her daughter, said: "Well, Leonora, you won't have to work all the evening on your new dress any way. That's a comfort. As to the

silk quilt, if you haven't taken it down yet, you needn't put it on the spare chamber bed until it's known who's going to sleep there." Then, as if a new idea had come to her, she suddenly asked the caller:

"Why couldn't Anna Gaddis take Mrs. Osborn and let me have the minister?"

"'Twon't do! 'Twon't do!" he answered, with a shake of the head. "Better wait and take them both later. 'Love seeketh not her own,' you know, and there mustn't be any differences. There are some who will sow tares quick enough, without our helping them along. I hear that he's a good man, and I depend on you folks here to stand by him, as Mrs. Hartwell and I intend to do. We've had altogether too much bickering in the past. It isn't any wonder that God withholds his blessing. There hasn't been a revival in our church now going on eighteen years. Think of it."

"We don't want any revivals or 'showers of blessing,' as they call them. Leastwise, I don't," she retorted. "Showers will never do any good where the ground is rocky. What we need more than anything else is some good hard sledge-hammer stone-breaking. If the

new minister don't tell some folks that I know what their sins are, and make them squirm, he may be as good as gold, but he won't change matters a bit. I tell you, Mr. Hartwell, we've got to have some repentings or some funerals before we can expect revivals."

"Well! well! well! you may be right," he returned. "Repentance is essential, but so is long suffering. The two go well together, but sometimes they're hard to couple." He paused for a moment, and then added, "I suppose I can call that little matter about entertaining the minister settled, so I'll step over and tell Mrs. Gaddis that you're somewhat hurried in your dressmaking, and are much obliged to her for offering to entertain Mr. Osborn and his mother."

Without waiting for a reply, he picked up his hat and left.

The confident way in which he had assumed Mrs. Treadwell's message quite took her breath away, and she made no reply. He had scarcely left the house, however, before she realized that her silence had been a consent, and that no course was open to her but to ac-

cept the situation with as good grace as she could.

"I wish that Mrs. Gaddis wouldn't try and run things all her own way," Leonora muttered, and she turned again to her work. "The whole thing was settled two weeks ago at the ladies' meeting, and every one expects that you're going to entertain them."

"It wouldn't be best to hurt Anna Gaddis," returned her mother. "You know that she was baptized only two years ago, and she has trouble enough living a Christian life with that husband of hers. It would just please him to have the church offend her. He'd have a new excuse for calling us all hypocrites. No, Deacon Hartwell is right. It won't do! It won't do!"

"Then I suppose that we've got to submit to all kinds of injustice," the girl answered, "just because a meddlesome woman hasn't been a church member more than two years, and an unreasonable man chooses to carp and snarl at Christians. You may think that it's right, but I don't. There's that cream cake that you made, and there's that large roast that we can never eat ourselves. Father isn't much of a

meat hand, and you don't eat anything but bread and vegetables, and there are all those crullers and custards. Think how we've worked the last few days cleaning up the house and getting ready; and now we're told that they're not coming to us, and no reason is given except that it doesn't suit Mrs. Gaddis. Have we all got to fall down and worship Mrs. Gaddis? Suppose her husband does talk, nobody cares what he says. Besides I heard him declare only last Sunday that he was as good a Christian as any one, and that he'd a great mind to join the church, only that church members were so narrow."

"I hope that he will never join the church until he has met with a change of heart, Leonora," her mother replied. "He isn't the kind of a Christian that will help Anna Gaddis much. As for the cake and things, we can manage to use them some way. Suppose you go out in the garden and pick a bunch of flowers. We'll send them over as a kind of welcome to Mrs. Osborn."

"Flowers!" exclaimed the girl with an angry toss of her head, "what are flowers? Never you mind, I'll get even with Mrs. Gaddis,

see if I don't. She's bound to have the Sunday School go to Simmon's Grove this summer. I heard her tell Mrs. Knibbs about it, but I'll fix it so that the teachers will vote to have the picnic at Spring Cove. I don't care a straw which place the children go to, but I won't have that woman dictating. She hates Spring Cove, and I know it."

"Don't make trouble, Leonora," returned Mrs. Treadwell. "Trying to get even with people doesn't pay; besides, your father wouldn't approve of your creating differences. You know he always stands for peace."

The girl pouted in evidence of her continued indignation and went upstairs.

CHAPTER II.

SHODDY OR CLOTH.

Mr. Crouch was considerably disturbed over his trip to Cranston. Not that he objected to going; on the contrary, he was pleased at the prospect of being the first person to meet the new minister. What ruffled his mind was the fact that Mrs. Osborn was to accompany her son, and he felt sure that it would be difficult for him to draw out the young man's theological opinions with her in the carriage, and he wondered whether it might not be possible to have her driven from the station in a separate conveyance, or whether she might not be induced to take the trolley cars. Such an arrangement would leave him free to ask all the questions he desired without interruption. But he could think of no satisfactory reason that could be given for her so doing, and he

was obliged to dismiss the idea from his mind. No, he must bring them both back to Rutherford himself.

It might, however, help him considerably if he could induce some woman to accompany him. She could keep Mrs. Osborn engaged in conversation, while he talked with the minister. So he called on Mrs. Gaddis.

On being invited into her sitting room he threw his hat on the table, and took the most comfortable chair that he could find. "You see," he began, "you're going to have the old lady here at your house with the dominie, and it's no more than polite for you to go to Crans-ton with me and meet her. I'll hire Sam Run-
kle's two-seater, so as we'll all have plenty of room. On the way back you can get acquainted with the old lady and I'll have a chance to pump the dominie. See? But if you go over with me let me give you a bit of advice. Don't let her play old hen because she's from the city. If she cackles, and shows her feathers, and gets to be condescending in her way of talking, on account of her chick being a preacher, you let on that it's our folks that's giving him the job and it's our folks that's

paying him his wages, and that we won't have any mothering business from her."

"No! I won't do anything of the sort," Mrs. Gaddis retorted. "The minister and his mother are coming here to my house, and are going to be under my roof, as you might say, and I'm going to treat 'em decent. So there now. I thought that Mrs. Treadwell would be awful mad about my taking 'em, but she was over this morning to thank me for relieving her of the responsibility, and to bring a cream cake that, she said, she made on purpose for 'em. Mrs. Treadwell says that her husband has met Mrs. Osborn, and that she's a woman the whole church can respect, and I'm going to respect her from the start whether she's my kind or not. That's my answer, and you've got it plain."

"But you will go along with me, or won't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I'll go along, if you'll drive Walt. over too," she answered. "He's got a lot of things to do at Cranston, and will come back on the trolley. I won't go 'less you take him."

"There isn't room for both of you coming

back," he explained, "but I don't know as I object to driving him over."

The carryall had not been waiting long at the railway station in Cranston when the whistle of the locomotive was heard and there was a general movement on the platform.

"You better not hang around any longer, Walt.," said Mrs. Gaddis to her husband. "If they see you with us they'll think that they've turned you out of your seat in the carriage."

"Nonsense," returned Mr. Gaddis, "I'll be missing as soon as they show up. You needn't let on that I came over with you. It's worth a cigar to see what they're like. Crouch, I'll bet you a smoke that the parson'll have the regulation ministerial smirk, and that his gear 'll be as black as the ace of spades. I know the type. They're all alike, buckram grins and pious twang. She'll strut and he'll whine. Bah! I hate the whole lot of them."

The train steamed into the station and there was a general hustle and bustle. Men and women with bags and bundles and canes and umbrellas left the cars and hurried to the street, or waited to greet their friends. Employees of the road busied themselves loading

and unloading trunks and boxes; hackmen solicited employment; weary travelers in caps and dusters came out on the car platforms to stretch their aching limbs and get a breath of fresh air.

Mr. Crouch and his friends scanned the faces of the passengers who left the cars, but the minister and his mother were nowhere to be seen. It appeared evident that they were not on the train, for the crowds were thinning out and the conductor was signaling to the engineer to start.

"What shall we do?" Mrs. Gaddis asked. "They haven't come."

Just at that moment a young man stepped up to the party, and, lifting his cap to Mrs. Gaddis, turned to the two men and said, "I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but can you tell me where I can take the trolley to Rutherford?"

The speaker was dressed in a dark checked business suit, carried a light colored overcoat on his arm, and held an alligator-skin bag in one hand and a cane and umbrella in the other. His frank, pleasing countenance and easy manners, won immediate consideration, and Mr. Gaddis answered;

“Rutherford! Rutherford! Why, the cars run only every hour, and one has just gone over. I’m expecting to ride back by them later myself.”

Mr. Crouch, who had an eye to business, and who had been disappointed in not meeting the minister, intimated that perhaps arrangements could be made by which he could drive him to the village.

“All right!” returned the young man. “How much do you charge? I have a lady with me, who is in the waiting room, and there are a couple of trunks.”

Mrs. Gaddis had been looking closely at the traveler while he was talking, and before Mr. Crouch could indicate the amount of money that he would ask for his services, she inquired:

“Be you the new minister?”

The young man laughed, and turning to her, lifted his cap again, and said: “If you mean Mr. Osborn, I plead guilty. This is Mrs.——”

“My name is Gaddis,” she declared, “and this is Mr. Gaddis and this is Mr. Crouch. We were looking for you.”

The two men stared at the traveler in sur-

prise, and only gained their composure when they felt the warm pressure of his hand in a hearty greeting.

"Just wait a moment," he said. "I want you to meet my mother," and he was gone.

"I swan!" said Mr. Crouch. "I thought that he was one of those 'ere drummers. He don't fill the bill of a dominie by a long sight."

Before Mrs. Gaddis could make up her mind whether social usage required her to follow the young man and meet his mother, he had returned. A bright little woman accompanied him. One would have thought from her youthful appearance, quick step and vivacious manner that she was not over thirty years of age, but the gray hairs that showed beneath her bonnet, and a certain maturity of expression that was stamped on her face, proclaimed the fact that she was nearer fifty. Although years had robbed her cheeks of their glow and had left their marks upon her forehead, she had not lost the cheerfulness of her girlhood, and she stepped forward with evident pleasure, and greeted the party with a winning grace, that at once set them at ease.

It was quickly arranged that she and her

son should start immediately for Rutherford, with Mr. Crouch and Mrs. Gaddis, while Mr. Gaddis should remain and look after the trunks.

The road from Cranston to Rutherford was beautiful. After following the trolley tracks for some distance it diverged and ran for nearly a mile through well-kept farm and pasture lands, and then entered a wooded district that was always shady and cool. Leaving the protection of the overhanging trees, the path led along the edge of the Woonscotten River to the Cranston Aqueduct, and then around the brow of a hill, where it turned to the east and went directly to the village of Rutherford.

The view from the hill was one of the most attractive in the neighborhood, and was sought by strangers in their drives and rambles. For many miles to the east could be seen stretches of cultivated land divided by fences and dotted with farm-houses and barns; while to the southwest the buildings of Cranston and the high chimneys, the shops and factories, spoke of business enterprise and activity.

The party had gone a quarter of a mile on their return journey when Mr. Crouch blurted

out in his rough way: "I say, dominie, what do you think about that Slauson trial that's going on in the Methodist Church? Do you take sides with the Bishop or against him?"

"Slauson! Slauson! I really don't know to what you refer," Osborn returned. "Yes, now I remember. Oh! that didn't amount to anything. A mere difference of opinion regarding some church usage. Dr. Overton, I believe, claimed that Slauson overstepped the bounds of propriety in a matter of privilege. I was quite busy at the time preparing for exams. and didn't give the matter much attention. What fine roads you have here! We haven't struck a mud hole since we left Crans-ton, and there are no ruts!"

"Git ap! Git ap!" was the only response.

The horses jogged along for some time without increasing their speed, when Mr. Crouch cleared his throat and said: "I heard tell over at Cranston that Dominie Sanford's declaring that there's two, and perhaps four prophets that had a hand in writing the book of Isaiah. What do you think about that?" Then he made a clicking noise with his mouth to stimu-

late the speed of the horses, and waited the minister's answer.

"Well, we had that matter up for discussion in our class some time ago," the young man replied, "and I made up my mind that, if God had a hand in writing the book, I'd be satisfied to accept it, whether he chose to use one, two or four men as his instruments. It seems to me, Mr. Crouch, that the whole matter simmers itself down to the question as to whether the Bible contains God's message to us or not."

"Git ap! Git ap there!" broke in Mr. Crouch. "That there off horse don't know what a driver means lest he slashes him with a stick, and striking a dumb beast is against my principles."

He lifted the reins and brought them down again over the backs of the plodding animals with a snap and then clicked with his mouth as before.

Mr. Osborn tried to draw his companion out on the subject of trees, birds, horses and crops, but it was in vain; Mr. Crouch remained quiet save as he answered the minister's questions in monosyllables. He seemed so preoccupied

that the young man determined to say nothing more.

After a period of silence, Mr. Crouch asked: "Dominie, what do you think about that whale swallowing Jonah? My wife tells me that Deacon Hartwell said in prayer meeting last week that he believed the whole story just as it is given in the Bible, only the whale wasn't a whale, but some other kind of sea monster. I don't go much myself to prayer meeting, but that's what my wife told me the deacon said."

Mr. Osborn turned and looked keenly at his questioner, as if to discover the reason of his curiosity. Then he said, "Do you believe that story?"

"No, I can't say as I do," Crouch returned with considerable positiveness. "It isn't common sense for a fish to gulp down a man, and keep him alive under water, and then let him go. I wouldn't take Jonah's word for it, if he told me himself."

"Would you take God's word for it?" the minister asked.

"Git ap! Git ap there!" Crouch called out to the horses in an angry tone of voice.

"Why in ——, why don't the beasts step up! Crawling along at this rate!"

"It seems to me," continued Mr. Osborn, "that the account we have of Jonah's life contains a great lesson. It is so easy to see the difficulties in the story that most of us lose sight of its message. To me the entire book is a call to absolute obedience, and a warning against shirking responsibilities. The fact that God cares for his servants enough to set them right when they go wrong, should make us all very thankful, whether he uses sailors, or sea monsters, or, indeed, anything else. Don't you think so, Mr. Crouch?"

"I suppose so," the man returned. "Git ap! Git ap there! I never saw anything like them horses."

"As to my views regarding the historicity of the account given in the Bible, I may have occasion to refer to them later, when an opportunity will be given to define my position exactly."

The practical turn that the young man had given to his answers, and his polite refusal to commit himself in private conversation, annoyed Crouch, and he wondered whether his

motives were not discovered, or, at least, suspected. Several times he opened his mouth for further interrogation, but changed his mind and addressed the horses. Furthermore, the minister's way of looking for lessons made him uncomfortable, for he feared lest he might be called upon to recognize the claims of Christ on his life, which would be embarrassing.

A turn in the road suddenly caused Crouch to realize that he was nearing Rutherford, and that he had failed to secure a single statement that might be repeated and criticised. He had heard snatches of conversation from the back seat, and knew that Mrs. Gaddis and Mrs. Osborn had no difficulty in entertaining each other. He was not, however, aware that Mrs. Osborn had, by her charming manner, and personal interest in everything, won the love and respect of her companion.

The boast that he had made on the preceding day came fresh to his mind and he determined to make one more effort and compel the young minister to compromise himself.

"Do you know, Dominie," he began, "the man that we had before you, Taller was his name—she joined under him," and he pointed

over his shoulder at Mrs. Gaddis with his thumb. "He was a right pleasant sort of fellow in his way, though I didn't take much to him. He was always urging people to repent and that sort of thing, you know. Well, one Sunday he preached on something or ruther, I don't just 'member what his subject was, but he went clean back on the fire and brimstone theory, and said right out that there wasn't any such thing as——"

"Did he deny future punishment?" broke in Mr. Osborn.

"No! no! I can't say that he exactly did that, but some of our folks thought that he wasn't just orthodox. Near as I could make out, he had an idea that fire wouldn't have any effect on a soul, as a soul was a spirit, and couldn't be burned. Next day I asked him straight whether he was prepared to assert that fire was powerless to injure a man's spiritual nature, and he said that it was. The old martyrs, he declared, were burned at the stake, and while their bodies were being consumed, their souls were growing clearer and brighter. As for brimstone, well, he didn't have much use for that either without the fire. The fact was

he looked on the whole thing as symbolical. Git ap! Git ap there! Hell didn't seem to cut much ice with him anyhow!"

Osborn laughed at his companion's concluding remark, but made no reply. After a few moments Crouch asked directly, "I say, Dominnie, do you believe in hell, or don't you?"

"Hell!" the minister repeated. "Why, of course I do. There is power enough in a keg of powder under the tradesman's counter to blow up his whole store and destroy his stock, and there's hell enough in human nature to make havoc of every one of us if we are not restrained by the grace of God. I tell you, my friend, it's just that law of sin, that I call hell in embryo, that makes so much trouble for us all, and that led God to have compassion on us, and send His son to die for us. You and I need Christ, and it all depends upon us whether we gain the victory through Him or let ourselves remain bound slaves to corruption."

"I tell you, Almira," said Mr. Crouch to his wife that evening, "our new dominie is a regular weasel, as glib as you please at answering questions, but smart enough to keep from

being cornered. I suspect that he's shoddy, a regular heretic, as you may say, and I'll catch him yet, and if I do—if I do. You mark my word, if I do, I'll rip off his mask, strings and all, see if I don't."

CHAPTER III.

SET APART.

Mr. Osborn had finished his work at the Theological Seminary two weeks previous to going to Rutherford. Though possessed of good health, he was not robust of body. The seminary examinations, partings from his old friends and class mates, and the numerous demands on his time in closing up his affairs, had taxed his strength considerably, so that, when he reached home, he was very weary, and wished that he had not arranged to assume the duties of his new pastorate so soon. The days that remained were spent with his mother in farewell calls on neighbors and in packing a few household effects, so that he had no time for rest and recuperation.

The Ordination and Installation services were to be held on the day following his arrival, and the afternoon and evening had been set apart for the purpose.

Mrs. Gaddis felt it incumbent upon her to entertain her guests continually, so that when Mr. Osborn went to the church, after a bountiful midday dinner, to meet the ministers who had driven in from the surrounding towns he was exhausted in mind and body.

At last the hour of evening service came, and the young man, accompanied by his mother, proceeded to the place of worship. He had hoped to have had time to compose his mind and prepare himself for the solemn meeting, but this had been impossible.

Committing his mother to the care of Mrs. Hartwell, he proceeded to the small Sunday School room in the rear of the church, where the ministers were in waiting. After a brief conference he returned with them to the main building and the service began.

The sermon that preceded the ordination was long and commonplace. By the time it was half finished the congregation had become weary and restless.

When Mr. Osborn arose and faced the pulpit, there was a general movement among the people, and whispered words could be heard all over the room. Some leaned forward in

their anxiety to observe everything that occurred, others turned their heads that they might more readily hear what was said.

The young man did not seem conscious of the presence of any one, save the ministers on the platform. Those who sat in the front of the church saw that he was pale and that his hand trembled as he leaned on the back of a chair and looked at the preacher who was addressing him.

His mother observed nothing of what was going on. Her head was bowed; she was pleading with God that He might give her boy strength and courage to fulfill his high and holy calling as a herald of the cross.

Soon the members of the church were asked to arise and indicate their willingness to receive the man whom they had chosen as their leader and guide and recognize his authority.

Retaining his hold on the chair that had given him support, Mr. Osborn knelt on a low hassock, and an aged minister, long loved by all of the churches, offered a prayer. His language was simple and direct, his plea devout and earnest, and his words few and well chosen. Before he closed his petition, he

reached out his hand and placed it on Mr. Osborn's head. Other ministers followed his example, as he continued his supplication, pleading with God that the young man might be endowed plentifully with Heavenly grace and that he might be set apart by the Holy Spirit to the office that he had chosen.

For six long years Osborn had been looking forward to the time when he should be ordained. During the last two years of his college life and throughout his seminary course a deep longing to preach the Gospel had possessed his soul, and now, when he felt the hands of the ministers on his head, there came to his innermost being a profound sense of the Divine Presence, and his mind, so recently restless and anxious, was calm and peaceful, and his whole heart surrendered itself to God. There, bowing in supplication, his spiritual sight was clarified and for a moment he seemed to see Christ.

Soon the vision passed, if it might have been called a vision, and he arose with a kind of religious exaltation; at the same time with a feeling of oppression, caused by the sense of being surrounded by a large number of people.

One of the ministers began an address, charging him to be faithful in his duties as pastor of the church. He looked at the man without apprehending the import of his words; then he glanced about the room. The congregation appeared as a confused mass of human beings. In an instant he was able to distinguish one person from another, and recognized several of his parishioners. His mother was looking at him, and he saw that she was absorbed in the service. Her face was to him as the face of an angel. How different she appeared from others! Her eyes shone with a brightness and expression that he had seen but once or twice before, when her whole soul had been wrought upon by some great spiritual emotion. Her lips parted, as though she were about to speak, and he wished that he might be alone with her and might throw his arms about her neck, as in childhood, and tell the story of his feelings and purposes. Then he tried to give attention to the speaker.

The address was not long, but it was followed by another to the members of the church, which was protracted and tiresome. Then a hymn was sung and the meeting closed.

The benediction had scarcely been pronounced when the people came forward to take him by the hand and assure him of their good will and support.

"Fine service! Fine singing! Fine sermon!" said Mr. Richard Cherpín, as he grasped the minister's hand and threw back his head to stare at him through a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. Mr. Cherpín was a little man with a round, bald head, puffy cheeks and wide-open eyes. "Very impressive, ah—a, and all that sort of thing, you know."

Having thus expressed his opinion he looked around the church with an air of great satisfaction, and added: "Every seat occupied; never saw such a crowd here before. If the congregation keeps like this, the trustees will have to, ah—enlarge the building or do something——"

Just at that moment, Mr. and Mrs. Crouch came up and Mr. Cherpín turned to them:

"Very auspicious opening, don't you think so, Mr. Crouch—Mrs. Crouch?"

"The proof of the crop isn't in first sprouts, Brother Cherpín," returned Mr. Crouch. "A good deal depends on the kind of weather that

follows. I just want to say to Dominie Osborn that he has our best wishes, and that we hope he won't get a swelled head over the enthusiasm of the evening, for our folks aren't always to be depended upon——"

"Oh, now, Mr. Crouch," broke in Mrs. Cherpín, "you mustn't discourage the minister at the first meeting. I'm sure that Mrs. Crouch doesn't think that we're unreliable. Do you, Mrs. Crouch?"

Mrs. Crouch looked at her husband and replied that she was sure she didn't know.

"But wasn't the singing glorious?" Mrs. Cherpín went on. "The choir just outdid itself, and Miss Bruding, wasn't she adorable? Why, her voice was as strong and sweet as a Sphinx. I thought I should have to fly when she came to that part about the angels bright and fair; and the sermon! Oh, wasn't it grand? How do you suppose Mrs. Rhyder managed to make the flowers stay up in that pyramid? It was beautiful. The Goths and Vandals couldn't have done better. She's a regular coot at such things——"

"How do you do, Mrs. Cherpín?" The speaker was a short, thick-set, middle-aged

woman, who had been waiting some time for an opportunity to speak to the minister. "And, Mr. Cherpin, I'm glad to see you. Oh, you here, too, Mr. Crouch, and Mrs. Crouch? Well, isn't this delightful? Mr. Osborn, it's a great pleasure for me to shake hands with you, and realize that you now belong to us all. It was a most trying ordeal that you had to go through. I wonder that you are not completely used up. Do you know, such services always remind me of the time when I graduated from school. That was twenty years ago. I was just eighteen years of age then. Think of it! twenty years ago. You wouldn't imagine such a thing was possible, would you? I won't tell you how old I am; women never like to have their ages known. I remember I was all dressed up in white with pink sash and ribbons, and had to recite an essay that Pa wrote for me. When I got half way through I thought I should collapse, it was so hot and close. Then when Professor Cringinson handed me my diploma, I——"

"Oh, Mrs. Conover, excuse me for interrupting you," broke in Miss Laura Saunders, "I want to shake hands with the minister be-

fore I go; Ma is over there waiting for me. Mr. Osborn, I think that you looked just too lovely for anything to-night, kneeling on that stool, with all the ministers putting their hands on your head. I had to look through my fingers to see you. I thought they'd surely muss your hair, men are so clumsy, but they didn't. I wouldn't have missed the meeting to-night for anything."

Miss Saunders passed on, and Mrs. Conover continued, "Well, as I was saying, when Professor Cringinson handed me my diploma——"

"Mr. Osborn, I want to take you by the hand before I go," said Deacon Hartwell, "I shall see you again Sunday, and look forward to hearing the message that you have for us."

"As I was saying," Mrs. Conover began again—"Oh, Mrs. Hartwell, excuse me, I didn't notice that you were standing there."

Mrs. Hartwell shook hands with the minister, but said nothing; then Mr. and Mrs. Ryder, Mr. and Mrs. Gaddis and young Oswald Bowman came up. So soon as they had gone Mrs. Conover tried again to tell Mr. Osborn how she felt when she received her school di-

ploma, but was prevented by others, who wanted to show their good will and meet the young man.

Many people claimed the privilege of speaking to the minister, and he was kept busy the next half hour. Nearly all who came forward were total strangers, so that while some of them might be remembered, he could not call more than a half dozen by name.

At last he felt that he could leave the church. His head throbbed, and he was very weary.

His mother had been waiting for him near the door. She had been greeted by many people, and had taken a seat in the rear pew for a few moments of rest.

Mr. Osborn had walked half way up the aisle, when he was suddenly intercepted by a tall man, who was accompanied by a short, dumpy little woman. They introduced themselves at once as Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Bubble.

"I want to prophesy, Mr. Osborn," the man began, as he squeezed the minister's hand, "that the church is going to have great prosperity under your administration——"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Bubble, talking very rapidly and laughing, "the people were

all so deeply infected. Now, don't interrupt me, Oliver. Don't interrupt me. You know that when I can't think of the right word, I have to invent one. They were so deeply infected by the proceedings of this evening that I am sure they will rally to the support of the work; under your leadership, Mr. Osborn, I don't see how they could do anything else. I myself was quite overdone by the gravity of the occasion——"

"You mean overcome, my dear," broke in Mr. Bubble. "You mean overcome, I am sure."

"Well, perhaps I do," she returned; "it is just the same thing. Overcome, then, but I couldn't go home without speaking a word of encouragement to Mr. Osborn, and telling him that we are all very glad that he is with us, and that we all mean to stand by him through thick and thin. It must have been a very trying thing to have stood there 'the observed of all observers,' as one might say, and I know that if I had had to kneel as you did all that time before such an arrogation of people, I should have been quite decomposed—no, that is not

the word I want, but then you know what I mean."

When Mr. and Mrs. Bubble had gone, Mr. Osborn hurried to his mother, and they left the church together.

On reaching Mr. Gaddis' house, he went at once to his room, and there sat for an hour contemplating the events of the evening. "Can it be possible," he said to himself, "that I shall ever influence the lives of the people by my preaching, when such a solemn service as we had to-night did not produce the slightest impression? O God, I am weak, show Thou me the way to their hearts!"

CHAPTER IV.

BROTH, VERY THIN BROTH.

The Sunday morning on which Mr. Osborn was to preach his opening sermon was bright and beautiful, but Mrs. Rhyder was discontented and cross. She had looked forward to attending the service and hearing the new minister, but her children, who had been ill, were not yet strong enough to be left alone.

"Well, if I must, I suppose I must," she declared to herself, and then went to the window and looked out. Her neighbors were on their way to church, and she imagined that she saw signs of anticipated pleasure on their faces, which annoyed her still more.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, "I don't see why Jack and Blanche couldn't have chosen some other time to be sick."

Pulling down the shade to shut out the view of her friends, she added, "I'd ask their father

to stay at home with them, as he did last Wednesday, when I helped to trim the pulpit, if he wasn't an usher."

Just at that moment her husband came down stairs.

"Oh, John!" she called out, "I wish that you'd stop at the doctor's on your way to church and ask him what I may let the children eat. They are both as hungry as bears, and I'm afraid to give them anything. I wouldn't upset their stomachs again for a farm. Wait a minute. You'll be sure to forget if I don't put it down."

"No, I won't forget," he returned. "The idea of my not remembering a simple inquiry like that. The doctor will think that I'm a fool to bring him such a message on paper."

"Yes, you will," she insisted. "I know you of old."

Going to her desk, she wrote: "Dear Dr. Brancher, won't you please let me know what I may give the children to eat? Poor, dear little things, they're hungry all the time."

"There, take that," she ordered; "you needn't come back. Send one of the boys over from the church with the doctor's answer."

As Mr. Rhyder left the house, he saw Mr. Osborn and his mother on the other side of the street and bowed to them. Then he hastened his steps, for if there was anything that he prided himself on as an usher, it was that he was always at church on time.

A few moments later Dr. Brancher read the missive that was handed to him, and, tearing off the back leaf, wrote his directions on it, and returned the paper to Mr. Rhyder, who put it in his pocket and hurried to the service.

On entering the church he was greatly disconcerted to find that the minister was offering the invocation. Forgetting all about the doctor's message, he took his place by the door and waited for the prayer to close.

Miss Maud Clevering, like Mr. Rhyder, was also very particular about being at church early, and was never late unless detained by her lover, who generally called Sunday morning to accompany her to the service. On this particular morning Mr. Bowman had, without her knowledge, been asked to assist in ushering. She had waited for him until the last moment, and then left the house. Reaching the church while the congregation was singing the open-

ing hymn, she handed Mr. Rhyder a pulpit announcement of the young people's meeting, and went directly to her father's pew.

Following her were two strangers, who asked to be seated. Crowding the notice that he had just received into his pocket, Mr. Rhyder led them to a place. Then he went forward, and, as he ascended the pulpit steps, drew what he supposed was Miss Clevering's announcement from the folds of his coat, and handed it to the minister, with the whispered request that it should be read to the congregation.

Mr. Osborn, on his way to service, noticed that Mr. Rhyder walked very rapidly, and, after returning his parishioner's salute, wondered whether it was later than he supposed. Under the influence of this thought, he hastened his steps.

Nearing the church, he looked about. The people were entering in large numbers. The leaves of the trees, bright and fresh from the cleansing of the rain, swayed on their branches, as though they were anxious to express their joy at his coming. The sound of the brook that flowed back of the meeting house could be

clearly heard. It was more rapid in its motion than usual, but its impetuosity seemed like the impetuosity of gladness, for, at a distance, it sounded like the rippling laughter of children, or a song of hope and exultation.

In a moment he saw Elder Root and Mr. Treadwell coming to meet him. Eben Root was called Elder, not on account of any official position that he held, but, rather, on account of the respect that was accorded him. He had been one of the charter members of the Rutherford church fifty-eight years before, and had now passed his eighty-first birthday. His venerable appearance, kind disposition, godly life and beneficent ministries to the poor and needy had endeared him to all the people in the village, so that gradually the title of Elder gave place to that of Father, as more expressive of respect and love.

After shaking hands with Mr. Osborn and his mother, Mr. Treadwell conducted Mrs. Osborn to the pastor's pew, and Elder Root, with an old school courtesy that always marked his bearing, offered the minister his arm, and led him to the Sunday School room, from which he was expected to enter the pulpit. There,

alone with the young man, he asked whether he could be of any service. Finding that there was nothing more that he could do, he placed his hand on Mr. Osborn's shoulder and, with paternal tenderness, said, "May God's richest blessing rest on you this morning, my young brother, and may you be filled with His Spirit." Then he left him and entered the church.

It would be impossible to describe Mr. Osborn's feelings as he went into the pulpit that morning. He was weary from the continued mental strain that he had been under, and his head ached; yet he was anxious to begin his work and acquit himself with credit, but the deeper longing of his heart was that he might be a true herald of the Cross. So, on taking his seat, he bowed his head and prayed.

The last verse of the opening hymn was being sung when Mr. Rhyder appeared and put a paper in his hand with the request that it should be read to the congregation. Unfolding the slip, he looked at its contents in astonishment. His brow wrinkled, and his face grew red and white by turns. Could he believe his eyes? What did it mean? Some one had evidently intended to play a practical joke on

him. If so, it was certainly a very inopportune time for him to do it. No, the paper could not be intended as a joke, for he had received it from one of the most substantial and staid members of the church.

He read the missive again: "Give them a little thin gruel this morning and again later. It will probably be all that they can digest at present, and all that will be required.—Brancher."

It did not seem possible that any one could be so officious and inconsiderate as to intend the message to be in the nature of personal direction to him. Brancher! Brancher! That name seemed to be familiar, but where and when had he heard it? Then, there was the request that he should read it aloud; it must therefore be a public announcement and have a meaning that would be understood by the people. No, that was manifestly impossible.

Time was passing, the last line of the hymn had been reached. He looked toward the door, hoping to catch Mr. Rhyder's eye, but he had gone out into the vestibule. A sudden hope possessed him, and he turned the paper over. There was nothing written on the other side.

The organist took his hands from the key-

board. The music ceased, and the people sat down. Jamming the paper into his waistcoat pocket, he arose to preach. His sermon had been carefully prepared and fully written, but he had determined not to be a slave to his manuscript, and had, therefore, left it at home. "I will begin my ministry right," he had said to his mother, "and speak face to face with my people."

Not feeling sufficient confidence in his memory, he had brought a few notes that he now spread out on his Bible, but his head throbbed, he was extremely anxious and nervous, and his mind was in a turmoil, so that his sermon headings meant little to him.

Seminary work, packing, visiting and moving had taxed his powers, but he would have endured the strain had not the last week been filled with unusual demands on his strength. Then, just as he was about to preach, that message came. He looked at his notes. They contained words, words, nothing but words. A confused buzzing, as of a hive of bees, started in his head, and he found it impossible to think. "A little thin gruel this morning and again later. It will probably be all that they

can digest at present," seemed to be written everywhere between the lines on the paper before him.

Mechanically he announced his text and repeated it three times, hoping thereby to regain control of himself. Then he read the first heading of his transcript and tried to recall what he had prepared. Oh, how he wished that he had brought his manuscript, and actually felt in his pockets, to see whether it had not been left there by some mischance. Slowly repeating the words that he had read, he tried to speak. It was in vain, thoughts would not come, and he hurried on announcing the sub-heads with nervous rapidity, while the words, "thin gruel, thin gruel," sounded continually in his brain.

In a moment he had reached the second heading and stared blankly at it; then, in utter confusion, he read on without extemporaneous word or comment. A sickening sense of complete failure took possession of him, but he was still in the pulpit, and he determined to make one last attempt to retrieve himself. Remembering an anecdote that had been used by a class mate in a Seminary sermon, he repeated

it, with violent gesticulations and emphasis, and then tried to indicate some way in which it illustrated the truth contained in the text. The digression filled up the time—that was something—and he sought to recall other anecdotes and repeated them, drawing on his imagination for details. He knew that he had been talking at random, but he could not help it. Finally he leaned over the pulpit and solemnly exhorted his hearers to stand true to God, and cast all evil out of the church and out of their lives, root and branch, and consecrate themselves, with all their powers, to Christ as their Lord.

Having thus brought his remarks to a close, he mopped his brow with his handkerchief and led the people in prayer. A moment later when he looked at his watch he discovered that he had talked just seventeen minutes, and groaned aloud.

No sooner was the benediction pronounced than he fled through the Sunday School room to the banks of the stream, that so short a time before had brought joy to his soul. There, seated on the root of a great tree, concealed from view, he buried his face in his hands.

Some one has said, "No man fails who does his best." Mr. Osborn had done his best. While he mourned over his inefficiency the Divine Spirit was preparing him for achievement, but he knew it not. In the judgment of many, the minister's discomfiture was an evidence of incompetency. In the judgment of heaven, it was a harbinger of victory.

Mr. Osborn remained seated by the stream a long time. At first, he made up his mind that he would leave the scene of his humiliation, turn his back on Rutherford forever, and seek another field of service; but the next moment he told himself that that would be cowardly; that he must remain, and, in spite of failure, make a success. Then he began to wonder what people would say, and spent the next half hour in bemoaning his condition.

Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder, and, looking up, saw Elder Root and Deacon Hartwell. They had evidently been searching for him in the woods and along the road, for twigs and burrs clung to their garments, and dust covered their shoes.

He tried to rise and take them by the hand,

but they forestalled his purpose and seated themselves by his side.

“Friend Hartwell and I have just been saying,” began Elder Root, “that you had the outline of a fine discourse this morning, but that our folks made a great mistake in putting the ordination and installation so close to Sunday. We should have arranged to have had them earlier in the week and given you a full Saturday to rest. We saw that you were worn out when you entered the pulpit, and couldn’t do yourself justice. Now we have come to say that it would be a great satisfaction to us all if you would take up the same subject this evening as a kind of continuation of this morning’s sermon. You said that you always wrote out your sermons in full, and it occurred to us that it would be comparatively easy for you to bring your manuscript with you this evening. Let us have the result of your study just as you put it on paper.”

Osborn turned and looked at Elder Root in surprise. “Then you don’t think that I made a fool of myself this morning?” he asked.

“No, certainly not,” Mr. Hartwell replied. “That story you told us about the bodies of

those miners that were found in the attitude of prayer, when the shaft was opened, was thrilling and to the point. I only wish that the application was a little clearer. You'll have to give that to us again some time."

Osborn made no answer, but put his hand in his pocket and drew out the paper that had confused him, and handed it to Mr. Hartwell, who read it and then asked, "Is this what Mr. Rhyder handed you when we were singing?"

The young man nodded, and Mr. Hartwell passed it over to Elder Root with a look that was wonderfully expressive.

"Rhyder made a mistake," he said. "That is Dr. Brancher's direction to some patient. Probably it was meant for Mrs. Rhyder; her children are not well."

They talked on until the young man grew more quiet, and felt his strength returning, then Elder Root insisted that he should go home with him and dine. "I'll give you a room to yourself, where you can rest," he said, "and you need not feel obliged to attend the session of the Sunday School."

Noticing a hesitancy on the part of the minister, Mr. Hartwell added, "I will stop and see

your mother, and, if Father Root doesn't object, I'll ask her to call and dine with you."

As the three men walked down the street, the old man held Mr. Osborn's attention with assurances of a large blessing that was in store for the church under his pastorate, every now and then appealing to Mr. Hartwell for a ratification of his views.

Most of the people made no comment on what had occurred, but at the close of the service went silently to their homes. They felt depressed and sorry for the young man, and at the same time perplexed at his behavior. He had preached acceptably six weeks before. Why could he not have done it again? There were a few, however, who gathered at the back of the church and in the vestibule that they might talk over the event of the morning and express their views.

Mr. Rhyder did not discover his mistake until he reached home, and his wife charged him with neglecting the children. He wondered how it came that Miss Clevering's announcement remained in his pocket, for he was sure that he gave it to the minister; then the

truth flashed to his mind, and he hastened back to the church to explain his blunder.

As Mr. Osborn and his mother had accepted Mrs. Treadwell's invitation to spend Sunday at her house, Mrs. Gaddis was cross, and the minister's apparent failure increased her displeasure. Mr. Gaddis, seeing that his wife was annoyed, taunted her on her admiration of ministers and Christians.

Rufus Timer, who led the choir, was outspoken in his opinion, and declared that the church had made a blunder in calling to the pastorate a babbling pulpiter, as he called Mr. Osborn.

Mrs. Cherpin said that she didn't know why, but that the British lion couldn't have been more nervous and frustrated than was the preacher, and that she'd like to have the hands of a Venus de Milo, that she might shake some sense into him.

Mr. Cherpin insisted that his wife was wrong; that it didn't make much difference what a minister said, or how he said it, if he only knew enough to stop when he got through, and that Mr. Osborn's sermon was short and

therefore was an improvement on the sermons of his predecessor, Mr. Taller.

Mrs. Bubble asserted that she wasn't going to church to hear such toddle. That the next time she'd stay at home and look after little Jonas, who had the whooping cough and required her intentions.

Mr. Boyar brought his fist down on the back of a pew and said that he could give the young man a few points on preaching.

Mr. Crouch, after having expressed his mind freely to a number of people in the vestibule, went to Sam Runkle's livery stable, that he might pour out his wrath in the ears of its proprietor.

Sam had driven a stage between Rutherford and Cranston until the trolley line was laid out, then he settled in Rutherford and began business for himself. His ready wit and quaint remarks made him a favorite with every one, and his stable soon became a kind of center for village gossip.

"You should have been to our church this morning," began Mr. Crouch. "We had a regular circus. The dominie got rattled over nothing and made a perfect fizzle of his ser-

mon and disgusted us all with his cant. It's a disgrace to let such a kid as he is into any pulpit. He ought to stay in the nursery until he can walk."

"How did he preach?" Sam inquired with a drawl. "Did he cree-p along, or did he canter?"

"Neither," returned Mr. Crouch. "He tumbled all over himself and didn't get anywhere."

"There's fi-ve kinds of preachers," returned Sam, removing a straw from his mouth and drawing his hand down over his face, "an' yer new parson is one of them, lest I'm ve-ry much mistaken. The-re's the Baloonin' preacher. He's filled up with gas or hot air; it doesn't make much difference which. He swe-lls up easy, an' looks nice either way. Gits up among the clouds and flo-ats around fer a while, movin' accordin' to the way the wind blows. Sometimes he collapses before he gits anywhere, but that ain't often. Then he comes down e-asy, not knowing where he's going to land, till all at once he catches in a tree or bramble bush, or something of that sort, o-r turns turtle in a mud puddle, an' has to give it up.

“Then the-re’s the Railroadin’ preacher; he runs on the same track a-ll the time, steamin’ ahead at a great rate. He doesn’t know any other way. It’s chu, chu, chu, stop. First head—that’s the station. Git off. All aboard fer the next remark. Chu, chu, chu, stop again. He’s reached the second head. Git off. All aboard fer another station, an’ so on, till he comes to the terminus, as yer may say, and makes an application. Sometimes he runs twen-ty five miles an hour, more often it’s fifty. Most of the stations he stops at ain’t worth mentionin’, but then others are.

“Then the-re’s the stilt-walkin’ preacher; he’s great on pulpit stunts, an’ sta-lks along above the people’s heads, an’ thinks he’s the biggest man in town, but he isn’t. He has to go along kind o’ careful, or he’ll trip on somethin’. Yer might consider him more interestin’ than any of the others on account of his height, but yer mustn’t forget that he’s stiff in the jints, an’ has to hobble all the time instead of walk.

“Then the-re’s the bird-flyin’ preacher; he’s light an’ pretty an’ graceful as can be, hoppin’ along or fly-in’ through the air, an’ perchin’ on the branches or twigs, with a chirp an’ a

peep, without knowin' much what he's doin', till all at once he sits down in the middle of the road somewhar an' ro-lls around, fillin' his feathers with dust. Women folks likes him better than any of the others.

"Then the-re's the hoss preacher. He jog-trots along, steady goin'; sometimes he balks at the rules of the church, an' sometimes he shies at a doctrine or so, and has ter be touched up with the whip. He's the kind I like, because after awhile he gits somewhere, calls whoa! with a good, strong application."

"Well, our dominie isn't any of the kind that you've mentioned," returned Mr. Crouch. "He's more of a mule than a horse, but to my mind he isn't either one or the other. He's a baby, a mere baby, insulting an intelligent congregation with twaddle, and then trying to cover up his jejunity by personal insinuations."

"Personal insinua-tions," returned Sam, with a start. "Whew! That's serious, who's he been talking about?"

"Members who are in good and regular standing," Mr. Crouch answered. "That's all I've got to say. You'll hear soon enough. People ain't going to be insulted from the pulpit and keep still."

CHAPTER V.

TAKE MY SILVER AND MY GOLD.

It was the evening of the weekly prayer meeting, nearly a year after Mr. Osborn's installation, when Mrs. Treadwell descended the steps of her house and stood for a moment on the sidewalk, as though undecided which way to turn. She had left word with her daughter that she intended to call for Mrs. Rhyder on her way to the church, but on reaching the street she seemed uncertain whether to do as she had said or go directly to the service.

Flakes of snow had been falling all the afternoon. As evening approached the storm increased in strength. Mrs. Treadwell opened her umbrella and looked about; then, as though afraid that further delay might cause her to change her mind, she began to walk rapidly toward Mrs. Rhyder's residence.

She had heard some one refer to her friend

as having spoken disparagingly of Mr. Osborn's work, and she was anxious to know whether the report was true. The young minister's enemies, under Mr. Crouch's leadership, had increased in numbers, and had become outspoken in their opposition to him, and she feared that her fellow-member had been influenced by their words.

Arriving at Mrs. Rhyder's house, she at once introduced the subject, and soon discovered that her friend sympathized with the views of the hostile faction.

"I tell you, Mrs. Rhyder," she declared with considerable asperity, "I tell you that this thing will make trouble in the church yet. Mr. Osborn may not be perfect; it is true that he lacks experience; but he's a good man and preaches helpful, practical sermons; a great deal better sermons than we have any right to expect with the salary that we pay, and his mother, we all know that she is a little girlish in her way, perhaps, for a woman of her years, but as intelligent and warm-hearted as any one in the church, besides being one of our very best workers."

"Well, I'm sure I have no objection to the

young man or his mother," returned Mrs. Rhyder. "I'm perfectly satisfied with him; I only wish that he had sense enough to select hymns that fitted his sermons. Mr. Timer says that they are as incongruous as possible, and as for her, it's my opinion that there should be quietness and seriousness in the house of God. It jars on my sense of the fitness of things to have her come in with that school-girl smile of hers and shake hands with those of us who want to be let alone. No, I'm not one of the kind that make trouble in a church. If I can't live peaceably with my fellow-members, I'll leave, but you know people will talk. Now, there's Mrs. Crouch——"

"Mrs. Crouch," broke in Mrs. Treadwell. "It's enough to make one's blood boil to hear those two people talk. I wish the Crouches would either stick to facts and be reasonable or else hold their tongues."

"But Mr. and Mrs. Crouch are members just as much as we are, and have a right to their opinions," insisted Mrs. Rhyder, "and there's Mrs. Gaddis and Mr. Bowman; there's a lot of them, and they all say that the minister isn't what he should be."

"Mrs. Rhyder, where do you stand, are you for Mr. Osborn or against him?" Mrs. Treadwell asked abruptly.

"Oh, I don't stand anywhere, as I said," she returned. "All I want is peace and harmony. I've talked with Mrs. Bubble and Mrs. Cherpin and Mrs. Boyar, and they feel the same. Mrs. Treadwell, you can't accomplish anything in a church unless the members pull together. We don't any of us like disagreements, but, then, what are you going to do? The people feel that Mr. Osborn isn't the man for the place, and he can't or won't see that, for consistency's sake, he ought to find another field and not stay to plunge the church into trouble. There may be something in what Mr. Gaddis says about the minister being a mere child in experience and knowing no better, when he pays particular attention to some families and neglects others."

"Mrs. Rhyder, what do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Treadwell. "I wish that you'd speak out plainly. Mr. Gaddis isn't a member of the church, and talks against all ministers, so it isn't worth while to pay much attention to his opinions, but if you know of any one Mr.

Osborn has neglected tell me who it is, and I'll ask him to call at once. I know that he'll be glad to do it."

"Mean?" she replied. "If you want to know who I mean, there's Mrs. Brancher——"

"Mrs. Brancher!" Mrs. Treadwell interrupted again. "I happen to know that Mr. Osborn has called there twice in the past three months, and his mother has been several times, but Mrs. Brancher has been out every time; besides, Mrs. Brancher isn't a member."

"Well," she returned, "it seems to me, after what happened that first Sunday he preached, he ought to manage some way to see Mrs. Brancher. You know how he broke down and made a regular goose of himself, just because John handed him the Doctor's directions by mistake, and then got mad and told us to cast out all evil from the church, root and branch. I wasn't there, but Mr. Crouch says that it was evident that he had a double meaning in what he said, and it may be so. Father Root is one of the dearest old men who ever lived and is our senior member, and Dr. Brancher is a good, upright physician, if he doesn't often get a chance to go to church.

How Mr. Osborn ever got hold of the fact that the Doctor used to be called Branch in his school days is a mystery to me, but he got hold of it some way, and had the audacity to call it right out in the pulpit, and that, too, when the Doctor is old enough to be his father. It just shows what a man will do when he's angry. Mr. Crouch calls it a piece of unwarranted impudence."

"Mrs. Rhyder! Mrs. Rhyder!" was all that Mrs. Treadwell could say.

"Oh, well, you may believe it or not," she continued, "but people will talk. Of course Father Root won't see any personal allusion to himself; he never sees anything bad in any one, but other folks see. If he don't stand up for himself, they'll stand up for him. As to me, you may be sure I won't make any trouble; all I want is harmony."

When the two women had reached the church door, Mrs. Bubble met them.

"Oh, Mrs. Rhyder, Mrs. Treadwell!" she exclaimed, "I'm so glad to see you. May I sit with you? Mr. Bubble couldn't come, and I'm alone. There, now, isn't it nice that we should meet; we do have such lovely prayer meet-

ings, and the sanctuary is always such a harrowed spot; I should say hallowed. My tongue is always tripping on my teeth—he! he! he!”

On taking their seats, Mrs. Bubble noticed that Mr. Bowman had come in with Miss Clevering, and she leaned over and whispered: “What a pity that that young man finds Maud so vacillating—I mean fascinating. Some people say they’re really engaged, but I don’t know.”

Just at that moment Mrs. Knibbs entered; she weighed not less than two hundred pounds and carried herself very erect. Her son was with her; he was a small man with curling mustache and black hair.

“Widow’s mite,” Mrs. Bubble whispered again, and covered her mouth with her hymn book, as though smothering a laugh.

Then Elder Root came in, accompanied by his daughter, and others followed.

When Mr. Osborn announced the opening hymn there were about fifty people present. After a brief address, several men participated. Finally Mr. Crouch arose and remarked that he was not able to attend the prayer meetings very regularly, and esteemed it a privilege that

circumstances were such as to enable him to be present on that particular evening. He furthermore wished to say that he had been greatly interested in the opening address and felt sure that the words spoken came from the leader's heart, and therefore commanded the attention and respect of all who were present. He was pleased to be able to commend the Dominie's earnestness. One could not impress others without themselves being impressed. He only wished that his young brother had given the subject more study. "Beaten oil in the sanctuary," he said, "should be the motto of every true minister, whether old or young, and not platitudes and trite statements, but then he knew that the love that all the members bore for their dear pastor would lead them to make due allowance for crudities and realize that, as time passed, he might grow to be a teacher of which the church would not be ashamed."

Mrs. Rhyder nudged Mrs. Treadwell at these remarks, and, drawing her lips together, nodded her head in approval.

But Mr. Crouch was not through, for he went on to say that beside "beaten oil" the great need of the church was orthodoxy and

consecration; right thinking, he declared, invariably led to right living, and that an absolute surrender of everything to God—time, talents and influence—alone brought peace and power. After continuing thus for a few moments longer, he sought to bring his speech to a close in a way that would impress his hearers with a sense of his own devotion, so he stretched out his hands, and in a grandiloquent way repeated a verse from the hymn that had just been sung:

“Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.”

He sat down well satisfied with himself, and his friends looked at one another with an expression of approval.

The time having come to close the service, Mr. Osborn arose and remarked that he had been pleased at the spiritual trend of the meeting, and was particularly glad that Mr. Crouch had been present and urged upon all the necessity of personal consecration. Then he said that at the last conference of the Finance Com-

mittee the officers had asked him to bring a matter of special need to the attention of the congregation. A mission Sunday School, under the care of the church at Stogan's Mills, required about two hundred and fifty dollars to renovate and improve the little chapel in which services were held. As it was a long time since any special work had been done on the building, and as some small repairs and repainting seemed almost imperative, he would, at the suggestion of the Committee, ask for a few subscriptions at that time and secure at least a portion of the necessary funds. To show his own interest in the work he would personally subscribe twenty-five dollars.

Mrs. Hartwell said that her husband, who was not present, would also subscribe twenty-five dollars, but she felt that the pastor should not be asked to contribute anything.

Father Root and Mrs. Treadwell each subscribed twenty-five dollars.

Mr. Hazzard said that he would give ten dollars.

In a few moments the amount required was nearly all pledged. Twenty dollars was still needed, and Mr. Osborn urged that, inasmuch

as so little remained to be subscribed, it should be made up at once.

Mr. Crouch had not responded to the call, and few of his friends had given anything. People turned and looked at him, knowing full well that he was one of the richest members. The delay became embarrassing, and Mr. Osborn was about to close the service when Mr. Hazzard, who sat well up toward the front, repeated without rising the verse that Mr. Crouch had quoted:

"Take my life and let it be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold."

Then he quickly called out, "Pastor, put me down for that last twenty dollars."

The words of the young man seemed to stun every one present, for there was perfect silence, and Mr. Hazzard, realizing that he had spoken hastily, dropped his head on his hands.

The Pastor was the first person to recover himself. Turning to the young man, he said, "Thank you," and then led the congregation in prayer, asking God's special blessing on the work of the Mission.

The closing hymn was sung without producing any soothing effect on the people. Some bit their lips, the young people giggled, others sang as loud as they could to drown the sound of levity. Mr. Crouch scowled and held his hymn book high, looking over the top with glaring eyes at Mr. Hazzard and Mr. Osborn.

The service had scarcely closed when Mrs. Cherpin rushed up to Mr. Hazzard and told him that an almoner could not be meaner than he was, and that it was downright contemptible to turn the remarks of a fellow Christian into ridicule. Then she went to Mr. Osborn and, shaking her finger at him, declared that Mr. Crouch and his friends would never forgive him for the insult.

Mr. Osborn was greatly worried. He could not understand why people should censure him, as Mrs. Cherpin had intimated that they would, yet he sympathized with Mr. Hazzard's feelings, for he knew that Mr. Crouch constantly complained of the way that the church work was done and gave as little as he could to help the workers.

He wanted to go at once and tell his young friend that he had made a mistake in repeating

the verse, but he refrained, knowing that Mr. Crouch's eyes were on him, and that the act would be construed into an evidence of approval. Mr. Hazzard came forward himself to shake hands. On hearing his Pastor's words of disapproval he answered:

"I know, Mr. Osborn, that it wasn't wise, but then I'm impulsive, and it seemed as though I couldn't help saying what I did, and somehow I feel that, while I might have spoken hastily, I did right."

CHAPTER VI.

I CLUM IN.

On going to the door at the close of the service, the people found a strong wind from the northeast had come up. The snow had changed to sleet, and the storm had gathered so much fury that the air was filled with whirling particles of ice that drove sharply like myriad knife blades against the faces of those who were obliged to expose themselves.

Mr. Crouch drew the collar of his great coat up around his neck, and buttoned its ample folds about his portly frame and left the church, letting the door slam after him. Others followed.

Those who feared to breast the gale huddled in the vestibule and planned some way by which they could speedily reach their homes, or waited for friends to come with extra wraps.

"Mrs. Hartwell, you live a long distance away," said Mr. Hazzard, "let me go over to Runkle's stables and have a closed carriage sent for you. It isn't but a step and I don't mind going out."

"Thank you very much," returned Mrs. Hartwell, "but I think that my husband will come for me. If he does not I will walk over to the trolley cars."

Seeing that he could be of no service, Mr. Hazzard accompanied the Treadwells to their home.

In a few moments he was back again.

"Mrs. Hartwell," he said, "the storm is very severe. It is doubtful whether the trolley cars are running. If they are, it's three blocks over, and you might have to stand and wait for them a long time. It really isn't safe. You would better let me order a carriage for you. I'll wait here for Mr. Hartwell and tell him that you have gone."

"Well, perhaps you are right," she replied. "You may get me the carriage, but it won't be necessary for you to wait. If my husband finds the church closed, he will go over to the

parsonage and inquire. Mr. Osborn can tell him that I have gone."

While a half-dozen people still remained inside the vestibule discussing the weather, a small boy, not yet seven years of age, was crouching behind the shelter of the stone steps without. He had been sent from Cranston to deliver a package and, having done his errand, was on his way back to the trolley cars, when, not being familiar with the streets, and blinded by the storm, he had lost his way. His thin, ragged clothes and white, pinched features proclaimed the fact that he was one of the unfortunate waifs of the tenement district, who, illy clad and poorly fed, picked up a living where he could.

Nearing the church, he observed a light shining through the window, and the thought came to him that he might find shelter within. It would be warmer and more comfortable than his own home, he felt sure of that, so he crawled down in the shadow, and waited his opportunity to slip in the door unobserved.

Some people left the church, and he shrank closer to the snow-covered pavement. Then he ventured up the steps and, opening the door

a crack, peered in. Mr. Osborn stood under the gaslight. He was talking to several people, and the boy fled. A gust of wind nearly whirled him off the steps, and the cold pierced him to the bones. He took hold of the sill to keep from falling, and retreated into the shadow. Brushing the snow from his pinched face, he blew on his bare hands and stamped his rent shoes on the pavement.

"When der whole push of dem inside is gone and dey turns out der lights," he said to himself, "den I'll crawl in. I see my finish if I gets cotched."

A closed carriage drove up to the curbstone. A young man leaped out and entered the church. He had slammed the door of the vehicle after him, but it did not catch, and swung open again.

The boy looked at the conveyance. It was all dark inside. He could see something fluffy on the seat, but he knew that no one was within. Suddenly the thought came to him that he might not succeed in entering the church, and the carriage would furnish at least a temporary shelter.

"Gee! but it's cold!" he exclaimed. "Guess

I can sneak under der bench. If it's going to Cranston, it's me game. Der boss on der perch's got his picter covered and can't see me."

He glanced toward the church door and then at the driver, and, stretching out his stiffened legs, cautiously moved toward the vehicle. The wind almost took him off his feet again, and he stood and braced himself for an instant, then he moved forward, and darted quickly inside the carriage. Feeling under the seat, he found that the space was too small to conceal his body, so he climbed up on the cushions and drew the furry robe about him.

It felt so warm and comfortable that he would have been glad to remain where he was all night. It was at least a temporary shelter, and if he was turned out, he could try the church again.

In an instant he saw a glare of light. Some one was coming out of the vestibule, and he flung the robe from him and crouched back into the corner of the front seat.

When Mr. Hazzard had assisted Mrs. Hartwell into the carriage, he closed the door and, giving directions to the driver, hurried away.

The boy did not dare to move, hardly to breathe. His limbs were cramped, and his heart beat fast. The rapid motion of the vehicle nearly jostled him off the seat, but he held his place and watched Mrs. Hartwell. He was in no immediate danger of discovery, for her head was turned toward the window. She was gazing out into the storm, thinking that, perhaps, she might see her husband on his way to the church.

The confined air of the carriage and physical weariness soon caused him to grow sleepy. After catching himself several times, he sank into a sound slumber.

Suddenly the carriage whirled around a corner, and in an instant he was thrown violently forward, falling in a heap on Mrs. Hartwell's lap.

With a cry of alarm she pushed him from her, and reached for the door, but the rattling of the wheels and the beating of the storm made it impossible to be heard, and the rapid movement of the vehicle caused her to realize that it would be dangerous to attempt an escape.

"Gee!" exclaimed the boy, as he opened his

eyes, stared at Mrs. Hartwell, and then crawled back into his place.

"I won't fall on yer no more," he said. The necessity of an explanation being manifest, he added, "It was awful cold out dere, so I clum in."

Mrs. Hartwell still held the door and stared in dumb astonishment at the heap in the corner. An electric light on the pavement flashed its rays into the carriage for an instant, and she realized that the intruder was a mere child.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I's Jack, just Jack," he answered.

"Where do you live?" she inquired.

"In Cranston, down on der dumps," he responded. "I ain't no fake. I just got off me beat, that's all, and it was cold. I'll get out now if yer'll let me."

"No!" she said, as she stretched out her hand and held him. "You couldn't get out now."

"Yer won't run me in, will yer?" he asked, in frightened tones. "I didn't mean no harm, that's on der level. Yer can roast me all yer wants, if yer won't run me in."

The carriage rattled on and she still grasped

his arm, peering into his deep eyes, and studying his thin face with a kind of fascination that held her. She could not tell why, but her heart went out to him in his misery, and she began to ask herself how she could give him help.

He tried several times to wrench himself away and escape.

"Won't yer let me out?" he pleaded. "I tell yer I didn't mean no harm. I was only cold."

"I'm not going to have you arrested, or allow any harm to come to you," she explained. "I merely want to learn all I can about you."

"Ain't I told yer?" he replied.

Soon the carriage stopped in front of Mrs. Hartwell's house, and she said:

"Here is where I live, Jack. Now, if you'll come in with me, I'll let you stay all night. It's too cold for you to be on the street. You can go in the morning if you want to do so."

"Ah, rats!" he exclaimed.

"Come!" she urged. "This is a hard storm and you've no place to go."

He held back, but for an instant. The wind and snow were too severe to allow him to hesi-

tate long, and wonderingly he followed her steps and entered the house.

Leading him into the sitting room, she pushed a hassock up near the open fire and told him to sit down. He looked about with a frightened expression on his face, and then slowly approached the glowing coals, and stretched out his benumbed fingers.

"Dis is hunkey," he said appreciatively. Taking a knit spread from the sofa, she threw it about his shoulders, and asked, "Are you hungry?"

"I hain't had no grub since yesterday; dat's on der level."

The tears came to her eyes as she turned away. "Stay where you are," she ordered, "while I go and get you something to eat."

"Dat goes," he replied, "and I'll give yer der nickel der man gave me for der fare," he replied.

Returning with a bountiful supply of food, she drew a low table up to his side and spread the meal on it. The boy began to eat, without regard to the knife and fork, the food that she had placed by his plate. When he had satisfied his hunger, she asked:

"What was your idea, Jack, in getting into the carriage? Didn't you know that you couldn't stay there?"

"I seed der whole push of dem in der steeple house, and me racket was to get in and sneak; I didn't mean to pinch nothin', dat's on der level. Den when der rattler came, I had a hunch. It was a cinch ter clum in. I couldn't get under der bench and sneak. When I seed yer picter, I knowed my finish had come sure."

"What is your father's name?" she inquired.

"Dad's name is Hotten, Dan Hotten," he answered. "What yer want ter know fer? Yer ain't goin' ter snitch on me, be yer?"

"Don't you think that he'll worry about you?" she asked.

"Na!" he returned, in evident disgust, "he doesn't tire himself about us kids."

"How about your mother?" she queried.

"She's croaked!" he answered. "I takes care of myself. Lem helps sometimes. I sells papes at der joints. Der newsies lets me have 'em, dat's on der level. I ain't givin' yer any song and dance, I ain't."

"Who's Lem?" she inquired.

"Lem's me brudder," he replied.

Mr. Hartwell came in. He had been to the church and had returned by the trolley cars.

When he had overcome his surprise at seeing the boy, and had heard his wife's explanation of his presence, he questioned the child himself. Then a bed was provided, which was gladly accepted, with no other expression of gratitude than that which his thin face showed as it lit up with pleasure, and his lips uttered, as he looked at the warm coverings and exclaimed, "Dat's Jim dandy."

When Mr. Hartwell went to the room the next morning the boy was not there. He had crawled out the window before daybreak and had climbed down the post of the back porch and so escaped.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COUNTERFEITER.

Mrs. Osborn had not been present at the prayer meeting, but seeing that the storm had gathered force, and that it was growing very cold, she built a fire in the sitting room grate, that her son might have a more cheerful welcome, and then prepared some chocolate for him to drink. She had scarcely set the chocolate pot back on the stove when she heard his step. After a few moments he entered the house, and came at once into the kitchen, where she was, and greeted her with a kiss. They both returned to the sitting room, and he drew up a chair before the glowing coals of the open fire, stretched out his hands for warmth and tried to speak cheerfully, but there was constraint in the tones of his voice and his brow was clouded.

Realizing that something had gone wrong

with him, and that, in time, he would tell the cause of his depression, she asked no questions, but went again to the kitchen and brought him some of the warm beverage that she had prepared.

In a few moments he arose, went to the window and looked out on the storm. Then he paced the floor uneasily, and went to the window again.

“Mother,” he said at last, as he pulled down the window shade and turned toward her, “I don’t know as I should complain; I have a comfortable home, and you are just the dearest and most considerate mother in the world; my church is growing, and my people, for the most part, seem to be appreciative, but, somehow, I feel that there are forces at work against me. I do not know just what the matter is, but the members don’t pull together, and I am, in some way, the cause of it. There is Mr. Crouch. He hasn’t many friends, but he has some. While they shake hands and try to be pleasant to me, I can see that they are not at ease, especially when he is standing near. They may be under obligations to him for aught I know. He’s a speculator and money

lender. They certainly act as though they were afraid to offend him. He was present at the service this evening, and made some remarks which were all right and appropriate enough, if he hadn't gone out of his way to fling at my youth and inexperience. Then he quoted a verse, that Mr. Hazzard very unwisely repeated, because Mr. Crouch hadn't subscribed anything for the Stogan's Mills School. Of course, it made him angry, and he scowled at me as though I were to blame. Mrs. Cherpin told me afterwards that Mr. Crouch would never forgive me. I cannot imagine why she should have said so, as I disapproved of Hazzard's act as much as any one, though, knowing Crouch as I do, I realize it was a great temptation."

Mrs. Osborn paused in the act of taking her son's empty cup to the other room for refilling, and, looking at him, said:

"John, you mustn't expect every one to like you. While you do not want Mr. Crouch's enmity, his friendship would not be a compliment, and, as for the rest you mentioned, you're letting your imagination play too freely. Think of Father Root; he's worth a dozen Mr.

Crouches, and he stands loyally by you, and there are the Treadwells and the Conovers and Mr. Hazzard and Mrs. Knibbs and her son and the Hartwells——”

“Yes, yes, I know,” he interrupted, “I have a host of friends. The Hartwells, they are as good as gold, only it’s funny, Mrs. Hartwell tells me so often that she’s praying for me. Of course, I like to have people pray for me, but her saying so makes me feel that perhaps I have a harder proposition in Rutherford than I realize.”

“Never mind about that,” she returned. “You have the proposition, as you call it, and you must do your best. There are plenty to support you. There is Mr. and Mrs. Boyar and the Rockwells and the Cleverings, and a great many more.”

“Yes, I realize it,” he answered. “I can’t see why the Cleverings should stand by me as they do. Miss Maud is engaged to that Bowman, and he hasn’t any love for me, and Ruth is but a mere child.”

“That reminds me, John, of something I want to speak to you about,” she said. “You stand and talk with Miss Clevering too long

after services. I don't suppose that you realize it, but some engaged men prefer that other men should not speak more than a passing word with their fiancées. Mr. Bowman looked at you rather disapprovingly last Sunday."

"Mr. Bowman!" exclaimed Mr. Osborn, somewhat petulantly, "Mr. Bowman! It makes my blood boil to think of his ever marrying Maud Clevering. He isn't one-quarter good enough for her. She's one of a thousand. The finest young woman that I ever met and he's—well, every one knows what he is."

Mrs. Osborn gazed at her son in surprise. His frequent attentions to Miss Clevering came to her mind, and now he declared that she was the finest young woman he had ever met. What did he mean? He had never praised any girl so heartily before. She opened her mouth again to speak, when the door bell rang.

Rising to answer the summons, she went into the hall, and her son followed her. A boy stood at the open door; his clothes were covered with snow and he was kicking his toes against the sill.

"Please, Mrs. Greaves wants to see the min-

ister right away," said the boy, and at once began kicking the sill again.

"Come in," urged Mrs. Osborn, "you're cold; come in and tell us what the trouble is."

"Can't stop," returned the boy. "Will the minister go and see her?"

"What's the matter?" Mr. Osborn asked, as he came out of the sitting room.

"Ed's been run in by the police for making fake money," the boy answered, "and Mrs. Greaves wants to see you quick."

"Tell her that I'll be at her house in a few moments," Osborn returned, as he reached for his overcoat, and the boy rushed off at high speed.

In a short time the minister was breasting the storm on his way to the widow Greaves' home.

Reaching the place, he knocked, and, to his surprise, Miss Maud Clevering admitted him. Mr. Bowman had told her, on the way home from prayer meeting, that Edward Greaves had been arrested, she explained, and she came to see his mother at once. Mr. Bowman would stop at the house and tell her father, who would come for her later.

Following Miss Clevering, Mr. Osborn entered the kitchen, where the broken-hearted mother was swaying backward and forward before the stove, moaning to herself, and wringing her hands.

The minister drew up a chair and tried to quiet the turbulence of her grief with comforting words. By degrees she became more self-controlled, and managed to tell the story of her son's fall and arrest.

Edward, a young man some twenty-three years of age, had become acquainted with a notably bad character about town by the name of Gorgan, who was an engraver. The two soon became inseparable companions, much to the annoyance of Mrs. Greaves, who sought every opportunity to warn her son against the influence under which he was placing himself. Her remonstrances only made him sullen and disrespectful, and the acquaintance rapidly ripened into a close friendship. Soon after meeting Gorgan, young Greaves became very secretive, and absented himself from his mother's company. When at home his main topic of conversation was the necessity of ready cash, and the benefits of possessing large wealth.

So things went on until that afternoon, when the police stopped a boy in the act of trying to pass a counterfeit coin, and, frightening him with threats of jail, secured the information that similar coins were being made by two young men in the third story of a vacant house. Following the clue, the police went to the place, and forced the door of the room. On entering, they found Greaves working at a portable forge and Gorgan busy cutting a die. Gorgan was the first to take in the situation, and, in an instant, leaped for the door. Passing a policeman, he fled down the stairs, where he was met by another officer of the law. Dodging arrest, he retraced his steps one flight and leaped out of a window and so escaped.

Greaves tried to reach the roof by a ladder. Just as he was about to push back the scuttle, the ladder was knocked out from under him, and he fell to the floor, where he was held captive.

A stamp press, a full set of counterfeiters' tools, some finely cut dies and a large number of half-finished coins were found in the room.

When Mrs. Greaves finished telling the story, she began to sway and moan again, and Osborn

let her go on for some time, when he renewed his efforts to comfort her.

While she owned the house in which she lived, she was poor, and depended, for the most part, on her son's earnings. His wages had been small, but recently, she explained, he had more money, which he gave to her freely. Young Greaves' fall and shame and her own pressing needs weighed heavily on her.

In the course of a half hour Mr. Clevering came, and it was agreed that he and his daughter should remain in the house overnight. Mr. Osborn promised the heart-broken mother that he would call at the jail on the next day and see her son. He then returned to his home.

The following afternoon he went to Cranstons and asked for an interview with the prisoner, which was readily granted. He found young Greaves seated at the end of a bench in his cell; his face was turned toward the wall, but he quickly looked around. Seeing who his visitor was, he glared at him defiantly for a moment, and then deliberately turned his back on him.

Mr. Osborn spoke of the regret that he felt in finding one of his old Sunday School boys

in such a plight, and expressed sympathy for him in his trouble. He said that he had come with a special message of love from the prisoner's home, and brought assurances that the church would follow him with its prayers and desires for his ultimate release. Then he began questioning the young man, in order that he might obtain some explanations that would furnish comfort to the stricken mother; but the prisoner kept his face turned away, and answered only in monosyllables.

Again and again the minister sought to find a way to his heart, but it was in vain. The sullen silence and short, sharp retorts of the young man gave him no encouragement.

Seeing that he could accomplish nothing, he said that he must go, and asked the privilege of offering a short prayer before taking his leave.

The request was no sooner made than the prisoner became violently excited, and, turning toward Mr. Osborn, he fixed his piercing eyes on him, and, flinging out his words in short, angry sentences, said:

"No, you can't! I don't want any pious twaddle. I've done it and I'm caught. That's all

there is about it. If it hadn't been for church members, I wouldn't be here. They're all a set of hypocrites, and ministers are the worst of the lot. Yes, I was a member of your Sunday School seven years ago, one of those goody, goody boys. Learned Bible verses and sung hymns and spoke pieces at exhibitions. I got prizes, too, and all that sort of truck. Bah! The church and Sunday School is nothing but bluff. I wasn't a fool. I saw through the whole thing. Knibbs was Superintendent, and wanted the largest school in town. He counted boys and girls as members who hadn't attended for months. He handed his fake list in to the Sunday School Association, and got the banner that year. I wasn't anything but a kid, but I saw faking paid, so I faked. Don't come around here with your pious blubbering. If you want to pray, go and pray with Knibbs, he needs it."

"But I wasn't the pastor of the church then," Osborn insisted.

"You are now, aren't you?" returned the prisoner fiercely, "and you've got folks on your list of members that ain't any more members than I am. They've been away for years.

Some have joined other churches. It's a fake membership, and you know it."

Osborn was silent, and Greaves continued his tirade. He had risen and was now pointing his finger at the minister in his excitement.

"I tell you the whole thing is rot. I was in your choir two years ago. What did I know about religion? Nothing. I had a good voice, and that's all the Committee cared about. So I was hired to lead the service with my singing. It was a fake. They all knew that I wasn't using my voice for God, but for cash. Church members called it worship. Gaddis and a lot outside called it profanity. I call it bluff."

He took a step nearer Osborn and shook his finger in his face, as he proceeded.

"You make all the people stand up when you take in new members. They promise that they'll watch over those that are joining, and treat them with Christian affection, and gird them with their sympathies, and pray for them, and all that. Do they do it? Do they do it? No, they don't, and they never intend to do it when they promise. It's a fake pledge and they know it. Then, with that lie on their lips, they take the bread and wine. If the church coun-

terfeits for converts, why can't I counterfeit for my mother? She's poor and needs the money more than the church needs members. Pray with me? Bah! Go and pray with your church members."

Osborn was taken aback by this severe arraignment, and shrank before the fierceness of the prisoner. Could all this be true? Yes, in a sense, but only partially true at best. The young man had considered but one side of the subject, and had drawn his conclusions from a totally false premise. To argue with him would be useless.

"Since you will not permit me to pray with you before I go," he said, "perhaps you will consent to shake hands."

"No, I won't," was the sullen retort, and he retreated to the further end of his cell.

"Very well," returned the minister, "you have severely criticised church methods, and passed an off-hand judgment on church members. I have not interrupted you, or presented any defence. One thing you have, however, forgotten, and it is essential. Christianity is not the same thing as churchanity. Christianity applies to Christ, churchanity applies to his

disciples, who are not perfect, who are sometimes very imperfect. No outsider is more conscious of that fact than the disciples themselves. In my ministry I have never asked men to believe in or follow the church, or Christians, but, rather, to believe in and follow the Son of God. Before going, I want to ask you to construct some argument against Jesus Christ, or else acknowledge him as your Saviour and Lord. I will call again."

As the door closed, Osborn walked slowly down the long corridor and out into the streets. He had hoped to hear some word of explanation or penitence, but he had met only obduracy and self-justification. Moreover, the utterances of the young prisoner made him feel the imperfection of Christians as never before, and he prayed for wisdom, that he might guide his people into lives of greater service and loyalty to Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAM RUNKLE'S OPINIONS.

"Good-afternoon, Sam," said Mr. Gaddis, as he picked up a broom that lay against the stable door and began to brush the snow from his boots. "I thought that I'd just drop in and see if you had a copy of this morning's Cranston Press. I hear that Ed. Greaves has retained Os. Bowman to manage his case. It seems like a pretty big hole for such a young sprig of a lawyer to pull any one out of."

"Bowman! Bowman retained by Ed. Grea-ves, did yer say?" drawled Sam, as though trying to take in the significance of the statement. "Wel-l, praps it's the ve-ry best he could do. Os. is sharp. I'd hire him every time, if I was guilty. If h-e can't find some way in plain sight of pullin' a crook out of a tight place, he'll make a show o' tuggin' at the ropes while he's diggin' a tunnel."

"Well, it's just as I always said, church folks are no better than others," returned Mr. Gaddis, as he seated himself on a bench and lit his cigar. "There's Greaves now, he used to be a member of the Sunday School, and until recently he sang in the choir. They tell me Gorgan's father and mother were Baptists, and as for Os. Bowman, Ha! Ha! Ha! he's a joke; growing awful pious of late, attending church and prayer meeting as regular as clockwork and looking after the Sunday School library like a major. Ha—there's more than one way of getting in with prospective clients. He knows enough to pick out the best church in town for his dress parade. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"And to get a wife whose father has to stretch his fingers to reach around his purse," added Sam with a chuckle.

"There's one thing strikes me as curious," continued Mr. Gaddis. "There's going to be an awful row in the church over there. So Mrs. Gaddis says. It's all about the minister; he don't suit some of the folks. Bowman hates him worse than poison, and the Cleverings think he's all right."

"A row! I should think so," broke in a

voice from the stable door. Both men looked up and saw Mr. Crouch, who had taken off his hat and was brushing the snow from its rim with his sleeve, as he advanced, "and it's enough to make a row. The Dominie over there is a fool. I'd say what kind of a fool he is, too, if I wasn't a church member and don't believe in cursing. He wasn't content with going all to pieces that first Sunday, but must needs cover his failure by insulting his members and flinging underhanded personal remarks at them. Last week he got mad at me because I wouldn't subscribe anything for Stogan's Mills Mission, and put young Hazzard up to deriding me in public."

"Ye-s, Rob, I heard about yer givin' the Almighty all yer silver and yer gold," returned Sam, "but objectin' to givin' him a check on the bank. That 'ere flourish of yourn at the end of what yer had to say was mighty fine. I couldn't o' elecuted better myself."

"'Twasn't that! 'twasn't that at all," insisted Crouch. "That mission over there in the bogs isn't doing any good any way. When Bowman brought widow Greaves around to my house last night to borrow a couple o' hundred dol-

lars or so, I helped her out without a question. I'm not mean, if I don't throw my money into a mud hole at Osborn's beck and call. I'll put my cash where I think it'll do the most good, without consulting the dominie, and if he hits me in the face for it, I'll hit him back, see if I don't."

"The widder owns the house she lives in," returned Sam, with a twinkle in his eye. "'Tisn't much, no, 'tisn't much, to be sure, but then it's worth a mighty sight more 'an two hundred and fifty; required security, most likely; 'twouldn't be beesness not to." Then he took a package of tobacco from his pocket and filled his pipe. Holding a lighted match over the bowl, he began to draw in his breath with a short, kissing sound, while still attempting to talk.

"Cha-ri-ty is a Christian virtue"—puff—"givin' to widders is charity"—another puff. "Lawyers is brokers what finds out about needy widders"—another puff, "A certain needy widder wants to open a little pin an' needle store"—another puff. "Doesn't need more 'an two hundred to do it"—another puff. "Will return the money in six months, at most a

year"—another puff. "Gets loan from a benevolent gentleman"—another puff. "Gentleman wouldn't take usua-ry fer a sawmill"—another puff. "But has a private understandin' with the broker"—another puff. "Commission's fifty dollars, please, says the broker"—another puff. "Benevolent gentleman would like to help some more needy widders"—a whole succession of puffs. "What in the name of goodness is the matter with this 'ere tobacco? Gaddis, reach me another match. Mr. Crouch, what did I hear yer wife said to the preacher t'other day when he called?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Crouch, glad to turn the subject, "but here comes Dick. I was just about to tell Sam and Gaddis how Mrs. Crouch met the dominie."

Mr. Cherpin put his glasses up to his eyes as he entered the stable and looked at the bench where the two men were sitting. Mr. Gaddis moved along to give him room.

"Ah—a—thank you, gentlemen," said the newcomer, as he sat down. "Fine day, you know, bright as twilight, as Mrs. Cherpin would say. You were speaking about the minister; unusual man that man Osborn. Got a

fine woman for a mother, too. Church never in better condition."

"Unusual! yes, you're right about that, Dick," Mr. Crouch replied with a half sneer, "but let me tell you how my wife met him when he came to call on her the other day. It's the richest thing out. The collector from the Gas company came to our house with the bill for October. As neither Mrs. Crouch nor I were home, he left word that he'd drop in later and get his pay. Well, about three o'clock my wife heard the door bell ring. She was upstairs sewing, and thought, of course, that he had come back for his money. So she grabbed her pocketbook and ran down lickety cut to let him in. On opening the door, there stood the dominee, as big as life, come to make a call. Ha! ha! ha! It pretty nigh took her breath away. Ha! ha! ha! Turning red in the face, what do you suppose she said?"

As neither of the men could tell what Mrs. Crouch had said, Mr. Crouch broke forth in another series of chuckles. After a few moments of suppressed merriment, he blurted out:

"Why, I swan, if she didn't up and say right out, 'Oh, I thought you were the gas man,'"

and Mr. Crouch slapped Mr. Gaddis' knee and laughed so loudly and heartily that his companions were constrained to join in his mirth.

"Wasn't far out of the way, was she?" he asked, when he was able to get his breath. "Hit the nail squarely on the head without intending to do it. Oh, I thought it was great."

"If it wa-sn't for ther gas man," Sam drawled, as he turned and grinned at his companion, "I reckon yer'd have to go back to taller dips. Yer wouldn't want to do that, would yer, Rob?"

Mr. Crouch had been an open opponent of Osborn's predecessor, and had done much to create a sentiment against him, and the livery man's question irritated him, so he made no reply, but continued his remarks.

"A dollar a thousand is all that the best gas is worth," he declared, "but I swan if I'd give fifty cents a thousand for such as we get every Sunday from our pulpit."

Crouch laughed at his own attempt at humor, and Mr. Gaddis joined with him, but the other two men only smiled.

"Perhaps you wouldn't give much for our minister's preaching," Mr. Cherpin remarked,

"but you know I think that he's worth two thousand a year if he's worth a cent. It's a shame for our people to pay him only twelve hundred and his house. Any man who spends ten years in getting ready to preach ought to be given not only his living, but extra for back time, gas or no gas. Ain't I right, Sam?"

"Ca-n't say as yer are," returned Runkle. "Preachers, like other folks, ought to git jest what they earn, whether they've been schoolin' one year or fifty. E-very week they spend a-gittin' ready ought to make 'em worth je-st so much more, but it don't allus. Three years a grubbin' an' reflectin' an' gittin' idees is worth a sight more 'an ten years a-playin' ball an' lollin' over books. Edication isn't soakin' in, as some young folks think; "it's grindin' in, an' that with a stone pestle. Beesness men help their clerks to git along in the world by makin' wages tally with ther work an' not with the time taken in findin' out how to do it."

"But what a minister gets isn't wages, you know, Sam," insisted Mr. Cherpín. "I've always been taught that money could never pay for spiritual services, and that a minister's salary was not a compensation but a support."

“Tweedledee an’ tweedledum,
Strike the lyre and beat the drum,”

replied Sam. “That’s a ve-ry pretty idee an’ oughter be cherished, but I reckon if the church didn’t git anything it wouldn’t give anything. Salary is wages and wages is salary, no matter what yer call it, but it isn’t all on one side; the people have got to be compensated, as well as the preacher.”

He paused to puff on his pipe and blow a cloud of smoke in the air. When it had disappeared he went on:

“Tit fer tat, give an’ take,
Fire fer fat, brush an’ break.

Money fer work, hand fer heart, hearin’ fer speakin’, interest fer warmth, labor fer pains. Tha-t’s what I tell the folks over at our church, an’ we ain’t got near so many members as yer have. Cash is nothin’ but wages, je-est simple wages, an’ if cash is all the preacher gits, he’s only a hired servant. I allers maintain that it isn’t a squa-r deal fer people to say to the preacher, ‘Here’s yer money, now it’s yer job to run the church, git ther, or bounce.’ If the minister pulls the coach up hill, the members

ain't got a-ny right to ride inside or hang on behind an' pull back. Being in the traces is a-ll right fer a preacher, if his members are in the traces with him, but if they ain't, well then, so far as the people are concerned, he's in beesness jest as much as the butcher, the baker an' the candlestick maker, a-n gets wages."

Just at that moment Osborn was seen hurrying down the street. He looked in at the stable door and greeted the men with a pleasant smile and wave of the hand, then he hastened on.

Mr. Crouch looked after him and turned away with a half audible growl, while Mr. Gaddis curled his lip.

"Fine man, very fine man," remarked Mr. Cherpin.

"Gentlemen," said Sam, "I reckon that whatever that preacher may say in the pulpit on Sundays, ther is-n't a man in town but'll be better fer putting it in practice during the week."

Mr. Crouch immediately left the stable, saying that he must go home. In reality he wanted to follow Mr. Osborn and find out whether he was on his way to Mrs. Greaves' house. Sam's remarks about the loan annoyed him. Not that

he cared what the liveryman thought concerning the transaction, but he did not want it to become town talk. The fact that Sam had been informed what terms he had imposed on Mrs. Greaves indicated that some one, perhaps the widow herself, had made them known. He was therefore relieved when he saw Mr. Osborn turn and go directly to the parsonage.

The minister had that afternoon been to Stogan's Mills. The district was barren, neglected and uninviting. The people were poor and shiftless. He had tried to interest several of them whose children attended the school in the improvements that were to be made in the mission house, but had not been successful.

On his way home he was obliged to pass through a street where a number of Hebrew families lived. Just as he reached the corner a little girl ran up to him dragging a sled, and begged that he would give her a ride.

He took hold of the rope and stepping briskly pulled her up the incline of the street; then he fell into a run. The rapid movement delighted the child and she laughed with glee. When he reached a corner, he turned the sled around

and, giving it a start, let the girl coast back to the place from which she had come.

Several women had noticed his ready assent to the child's request, and the heartiness with which he had entered into the sport, and he heard one ask another :

"And who may he be?"

Though the answer was not intended for his ears, he caught the words distinctly :

"He's one of those Christmen from Rutherford."

It was the woman's way of designating him as a Christian minister.

"A Christman, a Christman," he repeated to himself. It seemed almost profane, and yet had not the disciples of Jesus been called Christians ever since the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen?

"A Christman! then surely an annointed man, one set apart and sent of God for a sacrificial service," he said to himself. "A Christman imbued with Christ's spirit, possessed with Christ's power, entering by faith into Christ's atoning work. How could it be that he, a weak and sinful mortal, should be thus honored."

The thought took such a hold on his mind that he felt that he must be alone with God and ask for divine wisdom and strength, that he might be faithful to his call.

This was the longing that filled his soul and that caused him to walk so rapidly through the streets of Rutherford when the group of talkers saw him from Sam Runkle's stable.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S SOCIETY.

Mr. Osborn had made several calls on Edward Greaves, but failed to secure from him any evidence of genuine repentance. After his first visit, the prisoner talked more calmly and less critically, but continued to palliate his offence.

At last the trial was over, and the counterfeiter was adjudged guilty. The day on which he received his sentence found him taciturn and sullen, but restless, and apparently indifferent to consequences. He would pace backward and forward in his cell, like a caged animal, stopping now and then to look through the narrow barred window, and gaze at the bit of blue sky that was visible. Despair that comes after hope is the most deadly, and the prisoner had hoped, notwithstanding his acknowledged guilt.

It seemed as though every one in Rutherford was in the court room. The crowds filled every available space. The air was close and stifling. The people had looked toward the door for the entrance of the prisoner so often that they had become weary.

At last some one spoke. The voice was with authority, but the crowd paid no attention to what was said. Long waiting had deadened interest. Then there was a movement at the head of the stairs. People turned to ascertain the cause. The movement became more pronounced, and a general craning of necks followed. A man near the entrance said, "Here he comes!" and one and another repeated, "Here he comes!" "Here he comes!"

Pale, trembling, and with downcast vision, the prisoner entered the courtroom between two deputy sheriffs. Scores of people looked at him in morbid curiosity. Lifted heads with gaping mouths and staring eyes—hard and pitiless faces—were turned toward him from every side. Guarded and shuffled down the aisle by his keepers, he was quickly pushed inside the railing.

Glancing up for an instant, he saw many of

his old companions. There was his mother, with Mr. Osborn by her side. He dropped his face to the floor again, and waited.

Suddenly the ringing sound of the gavel was heard, and a man's voice uttered the command: "There must be no demonstration. The court officers will preserve order." Then there was silence, the silence of expectancy. Men are always dumb before the unknown and the impending.

The prisoner lifted his face again. It was expressionless. His eyes peered into vacancy, and he seemed as stolid as a statue.

The pronouncing of the sentence appeared to produce no effect on him. Not a muscle moved, not a word escaped his lips. The crowd thought that he was defiant. The Cranston Press said the next day that he was brazen, but the truth was, he was stunned, and was making a supreme effort at self-control. Some one thought that he swayed as though he would fall, and that he bit his lips. God alone read his heart. A thunderbolt startles and then subdues. A whirlwind uproots the trees and leaves them prostrate. One of the deputies touched his arm and said, "This way," and he started

up as from a dream, and dragged his way between his keepers into the open air, and then back to the prison walls. There are nights in which no stars shine. Such was the night that settled over Cranston and wrapped itself about the prisoner's soul.

Mr. Osborn led the broken-hearted mother to a carriage and she was driven rapidly back to Rutherford. People sometimes exist without living, they continue to breathe while starving. Mrs. Greaves was about to make the experiment.

The next week the women of the church met at the parsonage, and Mrs. Osborn spoke of Mrs. Greaves' sorrow and heroic effort to maintain herself, and asked for the sympathy and help of all who were present. Then she went on to say that the grief-stricken mother was a member of their church, and therefore had a claim on their generosity. She felt sure, she declared, that all the women of the Society would trade at the little store that she was about to open, and would use their influence to induce others to trade there also. When Mrs. Osborn had finished speaking, Mrs. Cherpin, who had been fanning very vigorously, de-

clared that she did not altogether agree with the pastor's mother.

"It's all very well," she said, "for us to trade with a woman who needs money, and then call it benevolence, but I say it's nothing more or less than charity, plain, simple charity, without any varnish, and that for the mother of a brazen prison convict who wears stripes. Besides, trying to live by selling papers of pins and sticks of candy is simply ridiculous. She must be as blind as Argus, and as stupid as Nestor, to think of such a thing."

"But what else can she do?" Mrs. Osborn inquired.

"I'm sure I don't know," returned Mrs. Cherpin. "What do other people do? For one thing, I suppose she could take in washing, or do day's work."

"She isn't strong enough for that," declared Mrs. Conover. "Now, there was Susan Stonely. Her husband died, was killed in the foundry. You remember, don't you, Mrs. Knibbs? Well, she was left perfectly penniless, as you might say. She wasn't——"

"Penniless or not penniless," broke in Mrs. Boyar, "Mrs. Greaves isn't strong enough to

do her own washing, let alone the washing of others. She's as slender as a reed, and as thin as a rail. It would kill me in three months. With all my aches and pains I couldn't do it, and I'm stronger than she is."

"I was just about to say," observed Mrs. Conover, "that Mrs. Greaves wasn't as strong as Susan Stonely, and she tried to do day's work——"

Just at that point Mrs. Conover was interrupted by the voices of several women talking at once, each suggesting some way by which Mrs. Greaves might earn her living.

Finally, Mrs. Gaddis raised her voice so as to be heard above the others, and asked: "Why don't she get married again, she isn't so old, and her husband has been dead going on ten years?"

The question was only greeted with laughter, and the discussion drifted into marriage and the importance of men leaving a competency for their families.

Mrs. Rhyder brought them back to the subject by saying that marriages of convenience didn't help women much, as giving one's hand without one's heart, always led to mismating,

and that while mismating sometimes furnished bread and butter, it didn't furnish comfort, and Mrs. Greaves needed comfort as much as food.

"We all know," observed Mrs. Conover, "that Susan Stonely was much stronger than Mrs. Greaves, and she was only able to work three months——"

"Better let her go her own way, and lend a hand," interposed Mrs. Knibbs, "she knows what she can do better than we do."

"That's what I say," rejoined Mrs. Treadwell.

"I say so, too," chimed in Mrs. Conover, "and what's more, if we go to interfering, it will be another case of Susan Stonely. When she finally broke down, she hadn't the strength of a fly, and became dependent on her friends. You remember, Mrs. Bubble?"

"Yes, I remember very well," returned Mrs. Bubble. "She was rehinged, I should say unhinged, from tuft to toe. She laughed and cried like a child, and went on so with her parrotsisms, parrot, parrot, parrotsisms, that it was just terrible."

"I move, Mrs. Chairman," called out Mrs. Gaddis—she had been writing on a slip of pa-

per, scratching out and rewriting—"I move the members of this organization this motion, that they spread on the Society their sympathies for Mrs. Greaves, and pledge each other, in person or otherwise, if they deem it advisable, to encourage her in all her lawful undertakings, when opportunity may occur, and leave the trading matter to the self-respect of each one separately and together, to act according to her good pleasure."

"I should prefer to have the wording of any resolution that we consider left to a committee," said Mrs. Treadwell, "and instruct such committee to embody a pledge of material assistance."

"So should I," "and I," "and I," called out several of the women.

"This is all unparliamentary. The motion is not seconded," interposed Mrs. Cherpin.

"What if it is?" inquired Mrs. Bubble. "I should like to know what our forefathers fought and bled for, in the Revolutionary war, if it wasn't to do away with parliaments, and all that sort of thing."

"I second the motion," shouted some one.

The resolution was lost. A committee was

appointed and a suitable expression of the sympathy of the Society was written and presented with a pledge of material aid, which was carried by a majority of five, and Miss Clevering, the Secretary of the meeting, was ordered to notify Mrs. Greaves.

When Miss Clevering called on the widow the next morning she found Sam Runkle and Mr. Osborn there. They were unloading some boards in front of the house.

After a pleasant "good morning" to the men, she knocked, and Mrs. Greaves came to the door. Instead of inviting her visitor to enter, she looked at her, and then at the two men in surprise.

Sam at once left the minister and went to explain what he was doing.

"Ye-r see, Mrs. Greaves," he said, with an awkward twist of his hand, "I happened to find some wood piled up in the lumber yard that didn't belong there, so I just pulled it down an' threw it in that there wagon of mine, thinking that perha-ps yer might have some use for it. I've spoken to a carpenter I know," he added, "an' he'll drop in this afternoon, an' nail up shelves for yer merchandise. He's going to

put up some in a store on the main street to-morrow, or-r next day, or-r on some other day, I disremember which, and he wanted to get his hand in ahead, so as to do it right, and I told him to come arou-nd here and practice. I thought that yer wouldn't mind."

Believing that Sam had stolen the wood, Mrs. Greaves was about to protest against its delivery. Miss Clevering, noticing that Mr. Osborn had hard work to keep from laughing, surmised that the liveryman had purchased the boards and was trying to avoid credit for his generosity, and persuaded the widow, who half guessed the truth, to let them be used.

Later in the day she called again to see whether the promised carpenter had come, and found him at work, under Mr. Osborn's superintendence. She would have been glad to have remained and talked with Mrs. Greaves, but Mr. Bowman had, of late, become very bitter against the minister. Fearing that jealousy might be the cause, she deemed it unwise to remain long in his company, even though another person might be present. Therefore, she prepared at once to go.

Offering her hand first to Mrs. Greaves, she

turned to her pastor, and, in a friendly way, thanked him for his interest.

Was it imagination? or was there something unusual in the young minister's grasp that day? She thought that she recognized a warmth and continuance in it that had never been there before, and wondered if it were so. One thing was certain, she felt a distinct thrill of pleasure in the holding. Yes, she was sure of that, and it frightened her, for she was engaged to another man. Her heart began to beat rapidly, and her cheeks burned. Hardly knowing what she did, she glanced up at his face. He was looking directly into her eyes, and the pressure on her hand tightened. Then she fled to her home, trembling like a frightened deer.

Osborn was greatly agitated in his mind over the occurrence, and, after giving the carpenter specific directions as to his work, he left the house and hurried to the parsonage. Going directly to his room, he threw himself into a chair and gazed out the window for a long time.

"My God, what have I done?" he said to himself, "why didn't I crush my feeling for that girl before it mastered me. I never in-

tended that she should find out that I loved her, but I couldn't help it. I couldn't help it. It wasn't right. No! it wasn't right, but I couldn't help it. Bowman isn't fit for her, but that makes no difference, she believes in him. Several people have tried to let her know that he isn't what he appears to be, but she won't listen to them. It's an infatuation, a delusion, and she'll stick to him if it kills her. If he wasn't in the way I could win her, I know that I could. I saw it in her face."

He arose and walked up and down the room for half an hour. At one moment he told himself that he loved the girl, and that he could not be happy without her; at the next moment he condemned himself for his affection. Then he prayed, prayed for himself and for her, and plead with God to deliver him from this thralldom.

We have been told that the heart of him who truly loves is a Paradise on earth. Osborn truly loved, but his affection had made the Paradise a battlefield where right and wrong struggled for the mastery, and he prayed that God would send his avenging angel with fiery sword to drive his passion forth.

There was but one course to pursue. He saw it clearly: seek help of Heaven and put forth all the force of his will to crucify his love.

Bringing his fist down on the dresser, he exclaimed: "I'll do it! I'll do it! From this moment she shall never receive any attentions from me that would not be agreeable to Mr. Bowman, and whatever my feelings toward her may be, she shall never again discover them in words or looks."

Miss Clevering's feelings were very different from those of Mr. Osborn. She had admired and respected the young minister from the time that she first met him; her esteem had ripened into friendship, and then into such cordial familiarity that she had often remarked to her father that he seemed to her more like a brother than a pastor.

Being always thoughtful and considerate of others, sympathetic and kind to the poor, and actively engaged in church work, she was frequently thrown in Mr. Osborn's company, and always enjoyed being with him. She would not have acknowledged, even to herself, that he was anything more than a friend, yet the

intimacy had grown to such a degree that it had been noticed and commented upon by others. She was therefore surprised and alarmed at the minister's behavior. Not realizing that she had herself fostered his love, she blamed him bitterly for his action, charging him with dishonor, and declaring aloud that she would never speak to him again.

When the first outburst of her anger had subsided, she reviewed her conduct, and confessed that she had herself been at fault. Finding a sympathy and companionship in her pastor that she could never secure from Mr. Bowman, she had sought his society, and unintentionally allowed herself to become attached to him, in a way that she knew was unfair to the man to whom she was engaged.

Miss Clevering's lover had moved to the district several years before. Opening a law office in Cranston, he had sought a boarding place in Rutherford. The church to which she belonged was convenient. He attended the services regularly, and soon became a member. His activity and zeal in advancing the interests of the organization brought him into favorable relationship with others, and led to his frequently

meeting her. It was not long before he became a constant and welcome caller at her house. Captivated by his attentions, and believing him to be a young man of Christian integrity, she mistook personal liking for heart affection, and at last yielded to his entreaties and pledged herself to become his wife.

As time passed, she realized that, while he was always considerate of her wishes, and ready to co-operate with her in the work of the church, there was something about his manner that spoke of insincerity, so that she grew to consult him less and less about her benevolent enterprises. Without being able to give any reason, she instinctively felt that he did not view life as she did, and that harmony of opinion on things that were vital was lacking. There was an air of unreality in all that he did for her along religious lines that troubled her, yet it was not sufficiently pronounced to call for any protest.

Her sense of justice often caused her to excuse his manner, and declare herself to be at fault. And she constantly tried to believe that the love they bore for each other would, in time, make them one in thought and purpose.

CHAPTER X.

MR. OSBORN'S RECREATION.

The summer passed and another winter came, a cold, raw winter that caused people to dread the streets and linger about the open fires.

Mr. Osborn, in consultation with the officers of his church, had arranged to join with the other churches of the place in holding a series of special services under the direction of an evangelist.

Mr. Hilton, who was employed to lead in the work, was an earnest man, with a large body and a warm heart, but not possessed of very good judgment. Having a deep hold on the Scriptures, he drew many of his illustrations from the lives of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Christ and the Apostles. Reverent and quiet in his manner, conversational in his delivery, eloquent in his descriptions, sympathetic and

persuasive in his pleadings, clear in his expositions of Scripture, forcible in his presentation of truth, bold and direct in his demands and earnest even to intensity in his invitations, he soon obtained a strong hold on nearly all who heard him. The church was crowded at every service, and many went forward for special prayer, and expressed a desire to lead a Christian life.

Mr. Osborn was deeply affected by the preaching, and spent almost all the time that he was not at public service, in prayer, Bible study and calling for religious conversation. A deep longing possessed his soul. He wanted to be used of God in bringing men to Christ, and he prayed for spiritual power. The name that had been applied to him on the street by a Hebrew woman reverted to his mind with renewed force, and led him to seek, as never before, the spirit of a true Christman. His whole being was so swayed by this desire that his feeling of love for Miss Clevering appeared for the time to be almost eliminated from his life.

During those days of religious fervor, he would frequently leave the evangelist and speak himself at Stogan's Mills, or in some overflow

meeting. Those who heard him noticed that his manner was less constrained, his message more spiritual and direct, and his deliverance more strenuous and earnest, than on former occasions. He felt himself that he was a better man than before Mr. Hilton came, and that his preaching took a stronger hold on the hearts of the people. Living, as it were, on the mountain top, he never imagined that he would ever descend again into the valley.

One evening, after conducting an overflow service and preaching with unusual power, he called for an inquiry meeting. A large number of people followed him into an adjoining room. Then he spoke again, and urged an immediate decision for God. Several young people acknowledged the claim of Christ on their lives.

His joy was great, and, in a state of spiritual exhilaration, he approached Mrs. Hartwell, who had just been praying with one of the new converts.

"Mrs. Hartwell," he said, "this is glorious. One week of personal work is worth a whole life of theological study."

She looked at him tenderly and sympathetically. A long life of Christian service and hal-

lowed experience had made her acquainted with the human heart and clarified her spiritual vision. She saw that he was living on his emotions, was sorely taxing his physical strength, and that the nervous strain under which he worked was not only unnecessary, but could not be endured for any great length of time, yet she feared to warn him, lest she should seem to discourage his efforts and dampen his ardor.

After a moment's hesitation, she said: "I rejoice with you over the results of these services. They have kindled a new fire of love in my soul, and made me feel the power of divine grace, but, oh, Mr. Osborn, you will pardon me if I seem to find fault. I am old enough to be your mother, but I feel that you are expending too much strength. Rest is imperative. You cannot stand this strain much longer."

"I never felt stronger in my life," he returned, "and, besides, I'd rather break from service than rust from neglect."

"Neither the one nor the other is necessary," she replied. "You know that I have often said that I prayed for you. My prayers have been more constant of late, for I have seen many in-

dications that God wants to use you mightily in the world if you will only let Him."

He looked at her in surprise. He had received her frequent assurances of intercession as indications that antagonistic influences were at work in the church that would ultimately lead to his being driven from the field. He had never imagined that she thought his own Christian character was not what it should be.

"What do you mean?" he stammered. "How can I do more than I am doing?"

"You might do less and accomplish more, oh, so much more," she answered, "and that is what God wants."

"Why, Mrs. Hartwell, you astonish me," he exclaimed. "One cannot do too much. After we have done all that we can we are unprofitable servants, you know, and as for accomplishments, that belongs to God alone. One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase."

"You do not understand, you do not understand!" she replied. "His upholding is manifest in our dependence. You are trying to make it manifest in physical and emotional energy. Strength comes through quietness and confi-

dence. Forgive me if I have hurt you; I so long to have you a true Christman."

"A true Christman," the very same title that had so greatly impressed him when used by the Hebrew woman. Where had she heard it? Why should it be repeated at this time? To be a Christman was the greatest desire of his life. He had spent long hours in prayer with that in view. Could it be possible that there was a significance in the name that he had failed to apprehend, and that his efforts had been in vain. No, that could not be, for the results of the past few weeks had been a testimony of God's approval, and he began to justify himself.

"Mrs. Hartwell," he said, "God knows that I have but one desire in life, to possess Jesus Christ in all his fulness and power. If that will not make me a Christman, I do not know what will."

"You do not understand your own heart, Mr. Osborn," she returned. "I know that you will not object to my prayers, so I will continue to ask God to make all things clear to you. Some day the Holy Spirit will cause you to see that, instead of wanting Jesus Christ supremely, you want him and some added bless-

ing. You may call it peace, power, endowment, or whatever else you please; it is always the Lord and something more. Be sure of this: the Master will not manifest Himself gloriously to any Christian who is not satisfied with Him and Him alone, the all inclusive One. You may persuade yourself that you want to possess Christ; but be assured He wants to possess you. His fulness is all that you need."

Mr. Osborn hung his head. He felt that she had spoken in Christian affection, and from the highest and holiest motives, yet his pride of opinion had been touched, and his most hallowed purpose adjudged imperfect, and it irritated him.

Any evidence of resentment would be unkind, so he assured her that, while he could not understand her views, he was grateful for her prayers.

Leaving the room, he went directly to the church. It was very late, but some of the people remained about the doors. After a few moments of conversation, Elder Root slipped his hand in Osborn's arm, and said, "Let me walk home with you, there is something I want to talk about."

“My dear Pastor,” he began, when they were well out of hearing, “please consider that I am an old man, and excuse me if I am over-solicitous concerning your health. Quite a number of the people are growing anxious about the burden of work that you are bearing, and, in love and respect, they have asked me to speak to you about taking rest. Your mother tells me that you spend most of the hours that you are at home in your study; and that you do not take time even for your meals. I know that she is apprehensive lest you should have a nervous break, and you know that is a very serious matter. No other minister in town is doing what you are doing. Now I want to ask you, not only on my own behalf, but also on behalf of many others, to promise me that you will absent yourself from the four o’clock Bible readings and spend the afternoons quietly. Mr. Hartwell, Mr. Treadwell, Mr. Hazzard, Mr. Clevering, Mr. Conover and I have all agreed to call whenever it is necessary under your directions if you will set aside every afternoon for absolute relaxation, on your bed or for exercise in the open air.”

Mr. Osborn felt no inclination to lessen his

labors, but his respect for the wishes of his friends caused him to accede to the request, and he began reluctantly to plan for rest and recreation.

After his noonday meal the next day he asked his mother to begin reading to him a story book that Mr. Rhyder had sent to the parsonage, and, throwing himself on the sofa, he prepared to listen, when the door bell rang.

His caller was none other than Sam Runkle.

"Well, Mr. Osborn," said the liveryman, as he advanced to greet the minister, "how are you? Heard that you wa-rn't goin' to meetin' to-day, so I jest druv rou-nd to see if I couldn't have the pleasure of yer company for a couple of hours, as I was agoin' to drive over to Cranston, an' back home by ther Dorchester road. I'm kind o' lo-anly, as yer may say, an' hankerin' after some one to talk to."

Osborn laughed, and said: "Yes, Sam, I'll go with you. Father Root has put you up to this I know. I promised him I'd take a little rest and recreation, and a spin around by Dorchester will do me good; besides I'll enjoy your company."

The two men had no sooner started than Mr.

Osborn began talking about religious interest in the churches. His mind dwelt so exclusively on the revival that Sam was obliged to exert his utmost ingenuity to turn the conversation, and interest his companion in other subjects.

The liveryman had just finished describing a hard drive that he once had over a mountain road when the minister remarked, "Sam, you don't know how happy I felt when Hepburn asked for prayers last night. His family have been anxious for him a long time."

"I've often watched hosses try-in' to pull loads of sile from excavations," Sam replied. "The men hitch 'em tandem like, one afore another, so as to git more power, an' the-n they begin to holler at 'em, an' make the greatest hullaballo yer ever heard, a-rippin' ther throats raw with yellin'; and ther hosses, they pu-ll an' strain and don't draw worth a cent. 'Cause why? Why, they ain't strong enough. Then four or five or six of them 'ere fellers, that ought to 'ave done it first, grab the spokes of the wheels and help. After that the hosses don't have a-ny trouble in doin' what they were told. All they wanted was a start, an' tha-t's the way it was with Hepburn an' a lot of other

decent kind o' folk. Hollerin' at 'em about be-in' religious don't do any good; they try themselves hard enough to pull up hill, but the lo-ad of habit, as yer may say, is to-o heavy for 'em. What they need is a helpin' hand to give 'em a start, an' tha-t's just what ther meetin's are do-in'. They stir up us old professas, that's been a hollerin' 'git up there, git up,' and make us take hold of the spokes. Speakin' of siles," Sam went on, "it do-ant seem to me that most folks can tell the difference between one kind an' another. Farmers that I know can't git any crops out of ther land worth mentionin', 'cause why? 'Cause they pla-nt clay things in sand sile, an' sand things in clay sile."

This observation furnished an excuse for extended remarks on the cultivation of the soil, and he went off into a dissertation on land and the secret of profitable crops.

In a few moments, Mr. Osborn referred to some man who would have nothing whatever to do with the services at the churches, remaining away, and criticising all that was done.

"It's na-ter," said Sam. "You ca-n't go agin nater. When it begins to rain, some folks turns up ther coat collars, je-st as though they

was sayin', 'I kin stand it if you kin.' Others, they hunch up ther shoulders, an' go along slow, smilin' at every one, as though they thought the drops wa-rn't thar at all, scoffin' at the idee, an' sayin', 'It's a-ll imagination.' Others the-y try to run away from what's comin' down, or walk awful fast so as to git under cover, je-st as though they was made of thin jellytin or somethin' of that sort, an' sayin' as plain as can be, 'Them showers of blessin' may be mi-ghty good, but I ain't got time to stop.' Others the-y shove up umberells an' put on like they don't care, walkin' along superiah over those as is gettin' wet, and remarkin' to themselves, 'I'm used to this sort of a thing, an' can git along all right.' Now, there's Rob Crouch. No-o! I won't jidge lest I be jidged. I'll call his name Smith, so as it won't be jidging Rob. He says it's all fanaticism, an' perhaps he's right. I heard a school teacher onst say that originally a fanatic was a man what belonged to a temple, an' not like other folks who lived in mud huts. That je-st reminds me, there's a stretch of mud land round the next turn in the road. It used to be covered with ice in winter, an' we boys skated on it. I wonder how it is

now. Was you much of a skater when yer was a kid?"

The minister answered the question, assuring his friend that he was still skilled in the art, and then went on to speak in glowing terms of the spirit of Christian fellowship that existed among the churches and declared that if the revival had done nothing else, it had brought the churches together.

"I was in Johnson's bakery last week," said Sam in reply, "an' while I was a standin' thar, waitin' to git a chance to speak to Johnson, in came a woman what wa-nted a loaf of bread. She was mighty particler to have a lo-ng loaf. Said that ther was more in it for the money. Well, afore he'd done wrapping up the long loaf in came a boy, an' tagged up to the counter with a nickel, sayin' as he was in a mighty hurry, an' his ma wanted a rou-nd loaf. Then a young gal bought some cake an' stuff, an' asked for a squar loaf. A man who was standin' alongside of me, wa-itin' for a chance, laughed when he heard the gal ask for a squar loaf, an' said: 'They don't know nothing. I could give 'em a pint or two. My wife's going to have company, an' I'm after a bra-ided loaf.

It cuts round and looks nicer on the table than any other kind.' Well, after he got his braided loaf an' went out, a fat woman came a puff-in' up to the counter, and asked for a pie and some jumbles an' a loaf of bread. I was kind o' interested to know which she thought was the best, when Johnson says, 'There, Mrs. Sconnce, I belee-ve you always buy a deep loaf.' Then a boy opened the door an' hollers out, 'Twist loaf, please.' We-ll that's awful funny, I said to myself, fer I couldn't see why folks didn't find out after a while which was the best and git that. Then I thought of our churches, an' I says to Johnson, 'Johnson, I got some new names for them 'ere loaves of yourn.'

"Well, that kind o' stumped him, and he wanted to know what names I'd give, so I says: 'The lo-ng loaves is Lutheran, 'cause they go back to the Reformation, an' the rou-nd ones is Methodist, 'cause they're governed by a crust that goes all the way round and takes in the who-le thing and everybody; an' the squar ones is Presbyterian, 'cause they're so stiff an' straight, with a slice fer ev-ry poor soul, no matter which way yer turn 'em, an' the bra-ided ones are 'Piscopal 'cause they look so nice an'

trim, fine for company an' a-ll that; an' the deep ones is Baptist, 'cause they believe in goin' down inter the water; an' the twist ones is—well, ther's only one church that that kind would fit, an' it's the Congregational, an' seein' my mother was a Congregationalist I says, 'Johnson, here's a nickel, an' I want a regler old Congregationalist twist, no other kind will do fer me.'

"Well, how he did laugh, yer'd 'ave thought he'd split his sides, an' he says: 'Namin' 'em don't alter' em. The fact is, Sam, I'll be honest, an' tell yer the truth, them 'ere loaves all came out of the same batch of dough. The difference is only in what folks is brought up on, an' what ther used to eatin'."

"We-ll, when I heard that I was so dumfounded that I said, 'Johnson, yer a cheat an' a fraud.' Then I took it all back, an' 'pologized, 'cause I remembered the 'Postle said that we bein' many 'er o-ne bread, fer we-'re all partakers of that one bread, which was Jesus.

"I tell yer, preacher, there's secrets an' lessons in every business. I ne-ver thought I'd get one in a bake shop, but thar it was sure as a kernel in a nut. I remember ye-ars ago I thought

of bein' a baker myself. It was just this way." 'Then Sam went off into an account of how his father thought of making him an apprentice to a baker.

When Osborn reached home, he felt invigorated and hungry, and spent the meal time in recounting to his mother Sam's remarks.

CHAPTER XI.

SCHEMES AND SCHEMING.

The next morning Mr. Osborn was disturbed in his work by a knock on the study door. Responding to the summons, his mother presented him with a card and told him that an old man was waiting in the parlor to see him. Looking at the card, he read, "Ormand Truesdale, New-kirk City." The name was not familiar and he turned the card over to see if any message was written on the other side, but nothing was there to indicate the caller's business, so he hastily changed his coat and went downstairs.

As he entered the parlor a man advanced in years and trembling with palsy arose and stepped forward to meet him. He was somewhat above medium height, but looked short, on account of a stoop in his shoulders. He stroked his long white beard and turned two piercing eyes on the minister. Some men look

only at that which is without the veil, others see through the texture. This man's vision was penetrating.

"I believe that I have never met you before," Mr. Osborn remarked, as he extended his hand.

The man grasped the proffered hand and held it without speaking, but continued to gaze into the minister's face.

"Won't you sit down?" Mr. Osborn asked, as he glanced toward an easy seat.

The stooping patriarch did not reply, nor move his riveted expression, but remained standing, and, tightening his bony fingers, communicated a distinct tremor to the minister's arm.

At last, speaking very slowly, he said: "I believe you are worthy, my son. My name is Truesdale, Ormand Truesdale. May I have the privilege of a private conversation. I have something to say, but I will not detain you long."

The minister shut the door and the man sat down.

"Mr. Osborn," began Mr. Truesdale, as he bent over and stroked his beard again, "my errand this morning is not pleasant, but it is

necessary, and I must ask you to hold it as strictly confidential. I have heard excellent reports of you and your work, and my own observation confirms such reports. I would not speak disparagingly of my fellow-men without just cause, for I despise gabblers and gossips. Every man has his faults, and it's easy enough to point them out, but when one man seeks to strike another in the dark, it is my duty to warn him. You are doubtless acquainted with a man by the name of ———. Perhaps it would be just as well not to mention names. He calls himself a private banker or money lender. A short, thick-set man, who has accustomed himself to address every minister as dominie, and every church member as brother or sister. I see by your countenance that you know to whom I refer. Beware of him. Some of his scheming has come to my knowledge, and you are concerned in it. I have traveled all the way from home to put you on your guard."

Mr. Osborn made no reply, and the old man continued, still fixing his gaze on the minister's face: "Well, this certain private banker is your enemy, and has contrived a plot by which he hopes to turn you out of your church, and put

a puppet of his in your place, a man whom he can use. I have heard, through an acquaintance of the minister who has been selected by this money lender to steal your pulpit, that he intends to ask the church over which you preside to give you a long vacation because of the arduous labors that you have been called to perform. Knowing the affection in which you are held, he believes that he will have no difficulty in securing the concession. Three or four months, I believe, is the time that he proposes to ask for you. Then his plan is to have them invite his henchman to supply the pulpit during your absence. My informant tells me that this henchman is making all his arrangements to come to Rutherford, with the distinct purpose of ingratiating himself into the good graces of the people, crowding you out and securing the pastorate. The private banker has written to a number of leading clergymen in the denomination, asking for recommendations for his man, so that he can present them to the officers of the church. When I heard what was planned, I came right on to see you. Reaching town last evening, I learned that the money lender was talking very freely about the splendid service

that you are rendering, and how disgraceful it would be if your people did not show their appreciation by giving you a long vacation, so I saw that he had begun to work his scheme. Now that I have put you on your guard, I will go home."

Rising, he took Mr. Osborn's hand again and held it while he looked steadily in his face.

"There's a young minister living in Newkirk City by the name of Scantlebecker," he added; "I just mention the name, that's all. You may hear it again some time."

Mr. Osborn thanked Mr. Truesdale for his interest and warning, and assured him that he would not forget what had been said.

"By the way," remarked the old man, as he passed out the front door, "may I ask whether there is a young lawyer living in Rutherford by the name of Bowman, Oswald Bowman?"

On being assured that there was, he asked again, "Is he paying particular attention to any young woman?"

Mr. Osborn was greatly surprised at the question, and told him of Mr. Bowman's engagement to Miss Clevering, whereupon Mr. Truesdale shook his head and said in a low

voice: "Clevering, Clevering; yes, that's the name; more scheming. I suspected as much. I shall have to examine my papers when I get back and see what my duty is in that direction. Good-morning; I thank you for listening to me."

The call and communication greatly agitated the young minister, not so much because of the danger that threatened him, but because of the reference that had been made to Mr. Bowman's engagement. The old man's intimation that the lawyer's betrothal was an evidence of more scheming was ominous, and he feared that Miss Clevering was being drawn on toward some terrible entanglement.

When he returned to his room he found it impossible to study; his mind was in a turmoil. The love that he bore for the girl again asserted itself; the flames that had been smothered and that he thought were quenched, broke out anew with increased fury, and he paced backward and forward in great excitement. Every few moments he would give utterance to some expression of love or fear.

Suddenly he paused and exclaimed: "What a fool I was not to have held on to the man and

demanded an explanation, but then he cannot have left town."

In an instant he descended to the first story and, grabbing his coat and hat, went out on the street in search of Mr. Truesdale.

He had not gone a block before he met Mr. Crouch, who detained him to speak of the splendid work that was being done, and to assure him of his sympathy and support; also to express his conviction that it would be ungracious for the church to allow such devotion to go unrewarded, and that if some one else did not see that justice was done, he should himself propose that an extended leave of absence be granted to the pastor.

The money lender's cordiality and solicitude confirmed Mr. Osborn in the belief that Mr. Truesdale had spoken the truth, and he became more anxious to find the old man.

Going from place to place, he inquired for the stranger, but it was in vain; he was nowhere to be found. It was evident that he had taken the trolley cars to Cranston on leaving the parsonage, and was on his way home, so he gave up the search and determined to em-

brace the first opportunity that came to him, and go to Newkirk City for further inquiries.

That evening Mr. Crouch was present at the preaching service; it was the first time that he had heard the Evangelist; Mr. Gaddis was also there with his wife. He had sneered at religion, laughed at Christians, ridiculed ministers, taunted his wife on her confession of faith, and condemned the churches for entering into the special work of evangelization, but some one persuaded him to go and hear Mr. Hilton. The preacher's words interested him; he went again and again, and finally became deeply impressed.

Sam Runkle came early and had ensconced himself in a corner at the back of the room.

Before entering through the Sunday School room as was his custom, Mr. Osborn looked into the church. He saw the money lender and lifted a silent prayer to God that the preacher's message might reach his heart. Turning to go, he was met by Mr. and Mrs. Bubble.

"We're going to have fine weather," remarked Mr. Bubble, as he grasped the minister's hand. "These meetings are going to revo-

lutionize the town! I wouldn't miss one of them for anything."

"Fine fiddlesticks!" returned Mrs. Bubble. "The weather is just vile. When I was a girl they'd call it muggy, but now I believe they say that there's humility in the air, but it's all the same——"

"Speaking of when you were a girl," broke in Mrs. Conover, who was just entering, "don't you remember——"

"Oh, Mrs. Bubble, Mrs. Conover," exclaimed Mrs. Crouch. "How glad I am to see you, and, Mr. Osborn, how do you do? These continued meetings night after night must wear on you terribly, and then the calling. Oh, my, I couldn't keep it up as you do! I'm really afraid that you'll have a break before you get through. You look all tired out. The church ought to see that you have a good rest. Don't you say so, Mrs. Bubble, Mrs. Conover?" The women assented, and Mrs. Crouch, noticing her husband inside, hurriedly left them and went to her pew.

"You remember, don't you, Mrs. Bubble," again began Mrs. Conover, "it was just such a day as this twenty years ago when——"

"Now don't ask any of us to remember as long back as that," laughed Mrs. Cherpin, coming forward and pulling her husband after her. "You know that we're all sweet sixteens," and she laughed again and added: "Whatever the weather was twenty years ago, it's bad enough to-night. I don't see why the people came out. I suppose it's because we're having a revival. When there's a revival the air may be as stuffy as a pair of bellows, and the ministers as stupid as the men of Gotham, the crowd will turn out just the same."

"I didn't intend to reflect on any one's age," said Mrs. Conover, "I merely wanted to ask Mrs. Bubble——"

"Oh, excuse me, Mrs. Conover," broke in Mrs. Bubble. "I just thought that I'd inquire of Mr. Cherpin how he likes his new motive—motive—motor car?"

"He likes it very much," Mrs. Cherpin answered for her husband. "But, oh, doesn't it cost a song to keep it in repair! Mr. Watts told him that it would be expensive, but he wouldn't believe it. Now he knows."

"That's the way it always is," returned Mrs. Bubble. "Buy a horse and it gets the blind

swa-swa-swaggers; own a motive car and it's always at the garbage—no, that isn't the word, but never mind.

“Nonsense! Nonsense!” exclaimed Mr. Cherpín, as he looked at Mrs. Bubble with wide open eyes, and brought his glasses up to aid his vision. “My motor car is of very little expense. Ha! ha! ha! But have you heard what they say about an auto? It's great on splashing mud, gashing gammon, crashing laws and cashing the town treasury. Ha! ha! ha! pretty good! pretty good! Come, Olive, let us go in, they're beginning to sing.”

“How I do love revival hymns!” remarked Mrs. Cherpín, as she followed her husband. “I'm as soft-hearted as a Scot about them. Isn't that one lovely?”

The singing broke up the little group of talkers and Mr. Osborn left the church to enter again through the chapel.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY TRINITY CUT ALL
LOOSE.

Every available seat in the church was filled, many people stood by the walls and about the doors. Hymn after hymn was sung with enthusiasm and feeling. The gospel message set to music and the appeal of grace that was repeated by the united voices of the singers thrilled the hearts of many and prepared the way for the sermon.

When the time came for the Evangelist to preach, he arose and requested the people to bow their heads in silent prayer and ask for a special blessing on the words that should be spoken. Then he announced his text. It was found in the Gospel of Matthew, the seventh chapter, and the twenty-first verse. Speaking slowly and with a clear enunciation, he said:

“It is a terrible thing for a man to deceive

himself, and imagine that he is right with God, when the whole basis of his character is false. God is not to be trifled with. The house that is built on the sand may look as fair as the house that is built on the rock, but the rain will descend, the floods will come, and the winds will blow and beat upon it, and it will fall."

Pausing, he pointed toward a row of young men who occupied a side pew and asked: "Young men, on what are you building?"

Sweeping his hand over the audience, he repeated the question, enumerating some of the false principles on which people relied for salvation, and declared with emphasis that a mere assent of the mind to the doctrines of Christianity or the punctilious observance of churchly rites and obligations were not sufficient to meet the demands of God. Then he drew a word picture of the Judgment Day with the assembled multitudes of earth, and described the appearance of different men as they drew near the great White Throne to render their account.

"In that day," he declared, "there will be ministers of the gospel and rescue workers, who will plead that they preached in Christ's

name; there will be church officers and sunday school teachers who will say that they cast out devils in Christ's name, and there will be evangelists and missionaries who will assert that they performed wonderful works in Christ's name, and the Judge will answer and say to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' If then some whom we now regard as chosen of the Lord will be cast out of His presence, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?"

For nearly a half hour he dwelt on the call of God to salvation, warned his hearers against delay, exhorted them to faith and obedience, and pleaded with them to become Christ's disciples. With dramatic skill he told the congregation of some patriots of the Tyrol Mountains who, being informed that a hostile host was approaching, prepared themselves for the attack, piling great masses of rock and stone on the edge of the precipice beneath which the invading army was expected to pass. Then he described the appearance of these mountaineers hiding behind their breastworks, silently watching for the enemy and waiting for a signal from their general to cast the accu-

mulated materials that they had gathered on their foe.

Having thus told of the danger and efforts of the patriots, he went on to describe the invading army marching forward in glittering armor with flying banners and confident tread, all unconscious of their doom.

Pointing toward one of the large windows, and turning his head as though he saw the soldiers outside, he called out:

“There they come!—See!—There they come!—They are getting nearer and nearer!—Now they are entering the dark defile!—The silence that lies about them is terrible. The shadows that enshroud their path are deep and ominous. They heed not the warning, but march right on.”

When he had wrought the congregation up to the highest pitch of interest and excitement he paused and looked up at the ceiling. His whole attitude and expression seemed to indicate that he saw the very edge of the precipice ribbed with rocks and stones. Then he gazed toward the window again and up at the ceiling. His attention was so fixed on the besieged and

the besiegers of his imagination that he became oblivious to all else.

Suddenly he caught his breath and cried:

“Up on yonder height, I hear a ringing voice. The patriot general is calling to his men, ‘In the name of the Holy Trinity, cut all loose—cut all loose!’ ”

The result was instantaneous and thrilling. Men trembled. Some bowed their heads in fear, as though shrinking from an avalanche of stones. On every hand could be heard the voice of ejaculatory prayer.

Before the congregation could recover itself, the preacher spread out his arms and exclaimed: “There are many here to-night who are marching on toward the defile of death, all unconscious of their doom. Soon the day of probation will end, soon a voice from the Eternal Throne will utter the awful words, ‘In the name of the Holy Trinity, cut all loose,’ and the consequences of your evil doings, now held back by the mercy of God, will fall in one great avalanche of woe. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Turn ye! Turn ye! For why will ye die?”

When the invitation was given for inquirers

to come forward, there was a general response from all parts of the room.

Mr. Gaddis, who sat grasping the seat in front and looking at the evangelist with intense interest and emotion, left his seat at once, and went down the aisle, followed by his wife, who was weeping in excitement and joy. As he passed the pew occupied by Mr. Crouch, he heard his old friend utter the word "fool." Turning, he answered in a loud voice, "You won't say fool, Rob, when all's cut loose, I tell you that."

Unsatisfied with the result of his sermon, the evangelist continued to dwell on the danger of delay, while he urged the impenitent to come forward. So skillfully did he follow his severest denunciations of sin with tender appeals, his pictures of impending wrath with announcements of mercy, and his declarations of divine justice with assurances of Christ's compassion, that strong men, who had braced themselves against his influence, yielded to his call; weeping women bowed their hearts in submission, and children trembled as before some unknown terror. An awful sense of God's presence, and a solemn stillness, broken

only by the voice of the preacher, and the involuntary responses and sobs of convicted souls, pervaded the place.

Ruth Clevering sat with two or three of her schoolmates about half way down the aisle. Her eyes had been riveted on the preacher from the beginning of his sermon. Not a word had escaped her. As he advanced with his argument, her little form became rigid and her lips pressed together. Those sitting near saw that a struggle was going on within her soul.

At last the evangelist leaned over the desk and said: "All men who know about the Christ expect to be converted before they die. No one intends to be lost, but many, very many, put off their decision until it is too late. I have preached to thousands of wavering men and women, but I have never met one who expected to go before the judgment seat unsaved, yet in the spirit of procrastination multitudes refuse to accept at once the offers of divine mercy, and wait, as did Felix of old, for a more convenient season. Thus, refusing and hoping, refusing and hoping, they live on until the day of opportunity has passed and the cry

goes forth, 'In the name of the Holy Trinity, cut all loose.'

"Now, in God's house, at this solemn moment, I want to ask again, Is there one who can say, after serious thought and prayer, with a clear vision of a final reckoning, 'I have deliberately chosen the path that leads to everlasting destruction and shall walk therein until death overtakes me. I never expect to enter Heaven; I never expect to see again my sainted father or mother, son or daughter; my eyes shall never behold the King in His beauty. Never, never, never. Now and forever I accept the sentence that is reserved for me, 'Depart, depart, ye cursed, into everlasting punishment!' "

He paused, as if for an answer. A shudder went through the congregation. "Is there one, one?" he asked. "No, not one. I knew it would be so."

Just at that moment there was a stir in the middle of the church; people turned and looked toward the pew in which Ruth Clevering sat. She had risen to her feet; her little hands grasped the back of the seat in front and held it rigidly; her face was white and quivering

with excitement; her lips were drawn in; her legs trembled. With an unnatural, intense expression, she gazed at the evangelist.

Some one took hold of her dress, and tried to pull her down, but she refused to move. Her father was not present, but her sister, who was on the platform with the singers, looked at her in surprise and consternation.

Mr. Osborn at once rose to his feet and said: "Ruth, I think that you did not catch the meaning of Mr. Hilton's words. He only asked those to rise who never expected to become Christians and go to heaven. I am sure that you love Jesus and are trying to serve him."

She turned at once and looked at him with the same fixed expression. "Mr. Osborn," she replied, "I perfectly understood what was said."

Pushing herself into the aisle, she paused, and fastening her eyes first on her pastor, then on the evangelist, and then on her sister, she said, in a clear, solemn tone of voice, so loud that all might hear:

"I'm going to hell—straight to hell—to hell. Amen."

Then she threw back her head defiantly and walked out of the church.

On reaching the street she fled to her home and her room. Fastening the door, she flung herself on the bed. There she gave way to heavy sobs, that shook her whole frame, and caused her body to heave, as with some intense emotion.

When Ruth had left the church, the evangelist called on Mr. Osborn, asking him to pray for the child, which he did, tenderly pleading with God that the faith that she had long shown in her life might be speedily followed by assurance of hope. While he was praying, Miss Clevering left the room and followed her sister.

Knocking at Ruth's door, she waited, but no response was heard, save the low moaning and sobbing of one in agony of grief.

Again and again she knocked and called, but received no reply. Then she drew up a hassock and sat close to the door.

"Ruth," she said, "sister is very anxious to see you, and help you, and she'll stay right here until you want her." Then she leaned her head on her hand and was quiet for a long

time, listening to the sobbing and moaning within.

Finally she heard her sister move toward the door. There was delay, as if from hesitancy, and the key was turned, and Ruth flung herself in Maud's arms and burst out in another paroxysm of weeping.

"Oh, Maud! Maud!" she cried between her sobs, "I wish mamma were living; she'd understand me. No one else does. Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do? They'll all think that I'm a brute, a heathen. I had to, I just had to say it. It wouldn't 'ave been honest not to. He asked us all out loud. Oh, dear; oh, dear; it was just awful!"

"Sister," Maud returned, as she drew the child closer to her heart, "you needn't mind what people say if only you are sure that you are doing right, and pleasing God. But you must have misunderstood Mr. Hilton's question. You surely love Jesus, you have often said so, and you cannot expect that you will be finally lost?"

"Yes, I do!" she answered, almost fiercely. "I've been thinking about it ever since he started the meetings, and I've read the Bible,

and asked God to save my soul, but it isn't any use; he won't do it. I'm just the same as I always was, and don't have any of that peace that the others talk about. Last night I wrote it all down in my diary, and I'll stick to it, I will." Then she took the diary from the drawer of the dresser, and handed it to her sister.

Maud turned the leaves until she came to the place and read:

"I know that I'm bad, but I can't help it. I've tried to be good, but it isn't any use. I've got a crooked heart and it can't be straightened, and I won't be a hypocrite and say that I'm a Christian when I'm not, and I won't join the church for any one. So if I'm lost, I'm lost, and that's the end of it. I don't mean to worry about it any more than I can help, for what's the use. There's a God and I know it, but He won't save me. I'm going to read the Bible every day and find out what's right to do, and I'm going to trust Jesus and pray to him so long as I live, and try and get other people to trust him too. If I can't be a Christian and go to heaven, there is no reason why I shouldn't do all I can to help others to be

Christians and go to heaven. Then, at least, when I'm lost, I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that it wasn't my fault. Amen."

The tears came to Maud's eyes as she read, but the tears were tears of sympathy and joy, for she saw that her sister's certificate of despair was in reality a record of dedication, and she threw her arms about her and kissed her, as she said:

"I am so glad, dearest, that you wrote it all down so clearly. I know that you mean what you have said in the diary. Now go to bed and don't think anything more about the meeting. Maud will come in and sleep with you. Some day you'll find that the path you have taken doesn't lead to the place you think it does."

Ruth attended no more of the revival services. For a long time she wore a fixed expression as she went about the house or associated with her friends. Few people questioned her on her testimony in the church that evening. As time passed her face relaxed, and her features assumed a more restful appearance. A quiet smile played about her mouth, and a new light shone in her eyes. All the turmoil that

stirred in her soul passed away and a continued satisfaction and joyousness took its place, and she began to wonder whether she had not become a Christian without knowing it. Long afterwards she said, "I learned, when a child, that Christianity is not found in grasping for evidences, but by quietly depending on Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and Friend."

CHAPTER XIII.

STREET PREACHING.

When Mr. Hilton had finished his labors in Rutherford, Mr. Osborn was urged by the church officers to take a vacation, but he declined because of the new converts, who, he said, needed his pastoral oversight. Then they promised to employ some one to take full charge of the work during his absence. A young clergyman by the name of Scantlebecker, they informed him, had been commended on account of his piety and zeal, and they would secure him to preach, and look after those who had recently confessed Christ.

This assurance only made him more determined to remain at home, and his friends, not understanding the reason of his persistent refusal, left him in perplexity and grief.

When Mr. Crouch heard of the minister's resolution, he was very angry, and went at

once to the livery stable, that he might express his indignation to Sam Runkle and whoever else might be there.

"That dominie of ours," he declared, as he entered the door, "is as obstinate as a mule. He's all broken down with overwork, and as nervous as a straw in the wind, but he refuses to relinquish his pulpit for a single Sunday. The officers of the church have promised to furnish a good supply during his absence if he will go away and rest, but he won't. It's a pretty state of affairs when a dominie sets himself up to defy the wishes of those who give him his bread and butter, and tells them that he will do just as he pleases. If I had my way, I'd teach him who was boss."

"Who-'s this Scantlebecker that I hear so much about?" Sam drawled, without looking up.

"Who is he?" returned Mr. Crouch, with increased indignation. "Well, I'll tell you who he is. He's an all right fellow from Newkirk City. The Committee got a dozen or more letters concerning him, and they all speak in the highest terms of his ability. It isn't often that a church has a chance of securing a first-class

minister for a short time at reasonable rates; one who has had experience, and all that sort of thing, and who will take care of the new converts as well as the pulpit."

"Do you know 'im personally, Rob?" the liveryman inquired.

"I've met him several times," Mr. Crouch returned. "Yes, I think that I can honestly say that I know him, and, more than that, that I have a very high regard for him. It may seem presumptuous in me to call him a friend, but I'm proud of the fact that I have at least made his acquaintance. Under the circumstances, you can see for yourself that the domine's pigheadedness is nothing more nor less than a personal insult to me."

Sam shut one eye, looked at his caller with the other for an instant, and then returned to his work, but began talking to himself. "We-ll, well, well, I de-clare to Josie," he said, "if it isn't the strangest thing that I ever heard. Rob Crouch on familiar terms with a saint. I've heard how he makes it known that that New-kirk City preacher is second cousin to the Angel Gabriel. H-e ought to know, yes, he ought to know, seein' he presumes on his friendship;

but what puzzles me, is how he ev-er got so heavenly-minded as to be pussenly attached to any celestial creeter."

Glancing at Mr. Crouch, he suddenly asked: "Rob, what yer got up yer sleeve? Take off yer coat an' let's see."

"Nothing! absolutely nothing, but the good of the church," the money lender replied, with considerable warmth. Sam's soliloquy and question increased his anger. Why was it that this man always suspected his motives and mistrusted his honesty? Up his sleeve! He resented the imputation, and without a word of farewell, he turned on his heel and walked out of the stable.

Sam's suspicion, that the money lender had some ulterior object in urging Mr. Osborn's departure, and Mr. Scantlebecker's engagement, soon took possession of others, so that the people began to feel that perhaps the minister might be right, and that it would be wise to defer his vacation until the regular period of summer's rest. In the meantime they met, and, in testimony of their love and confidence, voted to increase his salary.

While thankful for this mark of esteem, Mr.

Osborn was not satisfied. He felt that Mr. Crouch and a few over whom the banker had an influence were his secret and relentless enemies, and would, if they could, accomplish his downfall; and he made up his mind to go at once to Newkirk City and find out, not only about Mr. Bowman and his relation to Miss Clevering, but also about the character and standing of Mr. Scantlebecker.

Therefore, arranging his affairs so as to be away from home several days, he left Rutherford.

On reaching Newkirk City he inquired for Mr. Ormand Truesdale, and learned that the old man had been for many years a respected lawyer in the place, but on returning from a trip to Cranston a short time before, he had been taken seriously ill and in a few days had died.

The news disappointed him greatly, for he had relied on seeing Mr. Truesdale again, and hearing from him the history of the two men.

He had no trouble in learning about Mr. Scantlebecker, who was well known in the community, and regarded by every one as a man of unusual native ability, but possessed

of a badly balanced mind and thoroughly insincere. It was commonly reported that he had fomented quarrels in every church that he had served, and was not a settled pastor because of his untrustworthiness.

While the trip did not yield Mr. Osborn all the information that he desired, he yet felt that it was not in vain.

Stopping at Cranston on his return, he went to see a clerical friend for the purpose of arranging a pulpit exchange. The crowds that he passed on the street filled him with concern. Revival experiences had stirred his soul with compassion for men, and he tried to think of some way by which he could help the multitudes and interest his church in their behalf. Reaching his friend's house, he completed the business that called him there, and then asked what the Christian people of Cranston were doing for the masses that thronged the city thoroughfares.

"Nothing!" was the reply; "absolutely nothing but the holding of open-air services Sunday afternoons. We have established a number of preaching stations and engaged singers from the different churches. We ministers take

turns in presenting the gospel to the crowds in the best way we can. So far, we have had no marked results. Won't you join us? I can't offer you much encouragement, except the consciousness that you will be doing the Master's work. Cranston is easily reached by trolley, and we would all be glad to have you in our circle of laborers."

Mr. Osborn readily assented to the request, and promised to begin the following week.

The station assigned to him was a street corner in one of the most disreputable and dangerous tenement sections of the city, that was known as "The Dumps."

Seeking out the place, he presented himself the next Sabbath afternoon, prepared to speak.

With the opening hymn the crowds gathered. The common people love music, and are moved by it to heed the Gospel message. When prayer was offered a few rough, low-browed men, standing in front, looked at the minister and then uncovered their heads in reverence.

He had never been seen on that corner and the curiosity of the people was excited. They would know what he was like, and were ready

to sneer at his message, or grant him consideration.

There was more singing, then he stepped up on a soap box that had been provided and began his address. Having had no experience in open-air speaking, he sought to gain attention by straining his voice. With nervous energy, loud utterance and rapid enunciation, he told the story of sin and salvation, with great earnestness and simplicity, taxing his strength to the uttermost. In a few moments he wearied. His audience became indifferent to his words; some one on the outskirts began to converse in loud tones, and the children grew noisy. A young man shouted, "Ring off, and give the singers a chance."

The call created a ripple of laughter, which annoyed Mr. Osborn, and intensified his desire to gain attention. Raising his voice, he fairly shouted his message, gesticulating vigorously. A boy ran close in front of him and kicked the box on which he stood. There was another ripple of laughter, with a few words of protest.

Then some one from behind remarked to another, with a sneer: "Oh, he's only one of those

gospel sharks. 'The Christman who cut loose last Sunday beat him all holler.'

Turning quickly, he saw two swarthy faces staring at him. The next instant he felt a blow on the side of his head. It came with a suddenness and severity that stunned him. A broken brick had been hurled from the outer edge of the crowd.

With a cry of pain, he lifted his hand to his face, and then, swaying a moment, fell off the box and was caught by one of the singers.

The assault created a wild tumult. Men, women and children pressed forward, jamming one another, and gathering about the prostrate form of the unconscious minister. Some asked questions, others gave advice, still others denounced the assailant and swore at those who were pushing from behind, or peering over their shoulders with morbid interest and curiosity.

The man who had caught Mr. Osborn as he fell sat on the curbstone and wiped the blood from the minister's face, and at the same time called to those about him to go for a physician at once.

The low-browed men who had lifted their

hats during prayer held back the crowds the best that they could, and exhorted them to give the injured preacher more air.

The news of the assault spread with lightning speed to every nook and corner of the locality. People began to pour out of the streets, lanes, alleys and courts as by one impulse, and rush toward the spot, pushing one another, in a blind desire to see the man who had been knocked down. The pressure soon became so great that women and children, crushed and injured, screamed for help.

Then several policemen appeared on the scene and wedged their way through the jam with their clubs. An ambulance was called, and Mr. Osborn was taken to the hospital.

Among the crowd of boys that gathered was Jack Hotten. He had satisfied his hunger that morning from the waste food that had been thrown away by the servants of the rich, and was on his way home with some slices of bread and a half-decayed banana that he had taken from a garbage receptacle and that he concealed under his ragged jacket for his evening meal.

As he neared the corner, he saw that the

people were unusually excited, and he ran forward to ascertain the cause, but was too late, as the ambulance had carried away its burden, so he sauntered on. Hiding his bread and banana, he went off to play with his companions.

Late that night he crept into the court where his father lived, and climbed the rickety stairs of one of the filthiest tenements. Nearing the room that he called home, he tiptoed along the passage, pausing every few moments to listen. He knew that, if his father was drunk, he would be cruelly treated, and he wanted to find out in time, so that he could retrace his steps and seek again the shelter of the streets.

Hearing no sound from within, he came close to the door and called in a low voice, "Lem! Lem! You there?"

No reply being heard, he called louder. Lemuel, his older brother, was his only protector against ill treatment, and, while he wanted to make him hear, he did not want to rouse his father.

As his second call seemed to be unheeded, he turned away, and was about to descend the stairs, when the door opened a crack and Mr.

Hotten's face peered through. It was white, and his sunken eyes glared as with fear.

"Jack," he said in a hollow whisper, "don't speak loud, or make any noise, and don't let any one know I'm here."

"What's up, Dad?" the boy asked, tremblingly, for his father's face and voice betrayed the presence of some great danger.

"None of your business, you brat," he growled. Then, remembering that he needed his son's assistance, he added, in a coaxing whisper:

"Say, Jack, I'm in an awful hole and don't want the cops to find me. Can you keep your eyes peeled for your old dad and let him know if you see them? They'll be trailing me in the court before long, and I'll be run in. That's a good boy, come now, put me on to them, so as I can get out the window and climb to the roof in time to sneak."

"What you done?" the boy asked.

"Sh!" was his warning note, as he put his finger to his lips. "I hear some one," but it was only the passing footsteps of another tenant. Waiting and listening, he heard the sound

die away on the pavement, then he whispered: "I'll let on, if you won't squeal. I killed one of them 'ere preachers to-day. He was gabbling to a crowd of us, and I flung a brick at him. It hit him in the mug and he croaked. I saw him go."

"I know'd you ain't no good," the boy returned, "but you needn't be afraid of my snitching on you. That goes. Where's Lem?"

"When Lem comes," he replied, "he'll watch, and you can swipe some tobacco and grub for me."

All night long the boy sat on the stairs and waited. In the morning his brother returned, and immediately went away again in search of food.

Later in the day, Jack left Lemuel on guard while he proceeded to the corner where the preaching service had been held and learned more fully the particulars of the meeting and the assault.

One part of the narrative interested him greatly. It was the description that was given of the speaker. So precisely did it correspond with the appearance of the minister whom he

had seen on a cold, snowy night in the vestibule of the Rutherford church that he determined to catch a ride or walk to that village and see if he could hear whether the blow that his father had struck had proved fatal.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEWS FROM CRANSTON.

When the report reached Rutherford that Mr. Osborn had been knocked down on the streets, there was intense indignation throughout the town, for the young man was beloved by nearly every one.

On hearing the news Mrs. Osborn was at first prostrated with fear and grief, but summoning all her strength, she went at once to the hospital, accompanied by Elder Root and Mr. Hartwell.

No service was held that evening in the Rutherford church, but at the appointed time many of the congregation gathered about the door and discussed the event vehemently, denouncing the assailant, and bemoaning the condition of their pastor.

The reports that had come were meagre and from unreliable sources. A serving man from

Cranston declared that the minister was killed; a conductor on the trolley cars had heard that he was living, but that he would die before morning; a boy brought the news that he was badly cut, but that the physicians promised his recovery.

Sam Runkle did not attend the service at his accustomed place of worship, but joined the group in the vestibule of Mr. Osborn's church to talk over the event of the afternoon. When he entered, Mrs. Greaves was telling Mrs. Gaddis and Mrs. Cherpín, with tears in her eyes, how kind the pastor had been to her in her trouble, and Mrs. Gaddis was describing her husband's conversion, which, she declared, was all the result of the minister's personal interest.

This reference to Mr. Osborn's influence over Mr. Gaddis caused Mrs. Boyar to shake her head and bemoan the fact that the pastor might, at that very moment, be suffering excruciating pain; which possibility Mr. Boyar confirmed by a nod of acquiescence and look of approval toward his wife.

"It's all right, I tell you, it's all right," asserted Mr. Cherpín with emphasis.

No sooner had he given utterance to the

words than he noticed a surprised expression on the faces of those who heard him. Realizing that he had made a mistake, he immediately added, "It's all right enough—ah—for us to stand here, you know, and discuss the matter, but—ah-a—it seems to me that we ought to be—ah-a—doing something."

"Doing something! What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Cherpín. "Do you want us to take up a collection, or what? Dick, you're a very Quilp of kind-heartedness, but sometimes I think that you're most dreadfully stupid. Do something! The idea!"

"No one feels any worse about this assault on the dominie than I do," asserted Mr. Crouch, "but I tell you, my brothers and sisters, a clergyman ought to stick to his own church, and not be gadding about on street corners. The place to speak is from a pulpit and not from a curbstone. Let a man stand behind his own desk and preach what he is told to preach by the officers of his church, and he won't be in any danger of being insulted and knocked down. I don't mean by that to criticise or blame our dominie; he meant well, no

doubt, and we all know and admire him, but I speak on general principles."

Sam Runkle, who stood directly behind Mr. Crouch, waited until the money lender had finished speaking, then he drew his hand down over his face and drawled:

"Le-t me tell yer somethin', my friend. Ye-r may know an' admire the preacher, but I know an' admire an' love 'im. It's m-y opinion that a preacher who preaches a-ll that he believes is either a fool, or a madcap, I dunno which, p'raps both; a-n' a preacher who preaches what h-e don't believe, is either a coward or a hypocrite, I dunno which, p'raps both; a-n' a preacher who preaches only what h-e used ter believe, is either a stunt or a bigot, I dunno which, p'raps both; a-n' a preacher who preaches only what h-e thinks he oughter believe, is either a striplin' or a truckler, I dunno which, p'raps both; a-n' a preacher who preaches only what h-e's told ter believe, is either a tool or a slave, I dunno which, p'raps both; a-n' a preacher who preaches only what h-e really does believe, is a true man an' p'raps a prophet. Now I dunno where yer preacher Osborn gits his idees, p'raps it's from the

church, o-r p'raps it's from 'is mother, o-r p'raps it may come outer 'is head, or p'raps he purloins 'em from the Bible, or p'raps h-e gits 'em straight from God. H-e gits 'em, an' gits 'em hard. That's sure. An' whether h-e's right or wrong, he preaches what he really does believe, so ye-r can jidge for yerself what I think of 'im. A-s fer ther stone thrown, there ought to be hangin' for it——"

Sam might have continued his remarks had not Elder Root entered. Every one gathered about him to hear the news that he brought from the hospital.

In a few words he told them that Mr. Osborn was badly hurt, but that he was not to be regarded as in a serious condition; that the strain he had been under during the past few months had so run him down that his nerves were not able to endure the shock, and that, as a result, he was weak and restless, and his recovery would be very slow; but that he was conscious, and sent his affectionate regard to all the people, with the request that they would maintain the work until such time as he was permitted to return, which, he hoped, would be in the near future. Mrs. Osborn, Elder Root

further declared, had seen her son, and was now quiet and hopeful. She was resting at Mr. Treadwell's house, and did not wish to be disturbed.

The encouraging report brought comfort to all, and there was a general feeling of relief when the old man said, "Now, friends, go home and pray for the pastor, and take hold of the church activities with increased vigor, so that, when he returns, he will see that we loved him enough to stand by the work."

Miss Clevering, who had stood on the outer edge of the group and had listened with trembling lips and tearful eyes, drew a long breath, and gasped, rather than uttered, the words that expressed her feelings as she said, "Thank God," and then turned to Mr. Bowman and asked to be taken home.

Mrs. Hartwell was greatly surprised the next morning to be called to the front door by Jack Hotten, who had rung the bell and then stationed himself on the curbstone. Since the morning when he ran away from her house he had not shown himself, and she wondered what this sudden return meant. He was more ragged and dirty, if possible, than when she last

saw him, and reluctant about coming near the doorstep.

"Say!" he called out, when he saw her, "yous treated me white last time, and I cum to tell you something. De gospel shark what you know got hit in de mug."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Come in the house and tell me there what you want."

"I's on ter that racket," he answered, "I ain't going to be cotched. It wouldn't do no good to hold me up, 'cause I wouldn't snitch to de court for no one."

"I don't understand you," she said; "you'd better come in and explain."

"No you don't," he replied, with so much determination that further urging was useless. "I wasn't in de push when he was hit, but I know'd about it."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, as it dawned on her mind that he was referring to Mr. Osborn. "Did you see him struck?"

"Naw," he answered, "but I know'd about it, and ain't going to snitch;" then he asked, "Did he croak?"

"I don't understand," she returned.

"Did he croak when they took him in the rattler?" he tried to explain.

"Oh! now I think I know what you mean," she said; "you mean, was he killed? No, he was only bruised, and I believe that the doctors say that he will recover. Come in, won't you, and have some breakfast?"

"Rats!" he exclaimed. "I ain't no game."

She wondered why he should say "rats" in response to her invitation and looked at him inquiringly.

"Is what you said on de level? Didn't he croak sure?" he asked.

"No; he was only slightly injured," was her assuring reply.

"Gee! dat's hunkie," he exclaimed, and ran off as rapidly as his little legs would carry him.

She returned to the house in astonishment. Why should the child take such an interest, and come all the way from Cranston to find out about Mr. Osborn's condition? And how did he know that she was acquainted with the minister?

The following Sunday the Rev. Mr. Scantlebecker preached in the church. His name had been suggested by Mr. Crouch, and as he was

the only man immediately available he was engaged to occupy the pulpit. His sermon was not spiritual nor helpful, but it was interesting, and was delivered with oratorical effect.

Mr. Crouch was delighted and, at the close of the service, urged Mr. Hartwell and Mr. Treadwell to retain Mr. Scantlebecker until the pastor's recovery.

Feeling unusually happy over the turn of events, he left the two men, and started on his way home, smiling and bowing to almost every one that he met.

"It's coming out all right," he said to himself. "I couldn't have planned it better. The dominie's going to get well in time; that's good. It would be a misfortune to have him die, but it will take some weeks, perhaps months, and then the church will insist on his having a long rest. The people all like Mr. Scantlebecker. Ha! ha! ha! And to think that the dominie should have played into my hands so easily. The street preaching did it. Ha! ha! ha!"

Just at that moment he turned the corner and met Mr. Oswald Bowman face to face. The smile that illuminated his countenance grew more radiant as he stretched out his hand to the young man.

"Bowman, I'm glad to see you. How do you do?" he exclaimed, but instantly caught his breath and drew back, for the man, who was evidently in a towering rage, clinched his fists and scowled back at him.

"Who got that fellow to preach this morning?" growled the lawyer.

"Wh—wh—why," returned the money lender in surprise, "th—th—the church, I suppose. Didn't you like him? Every one I've seen spoke well of him."

"Like him? Like him?" roared Bowman, with an oath, as he vehemently raised his fist. "No, I didn't like him. I caught sight of him as I went into church and that was enough for me. I skipped at once." The color deepened in his face as he took a long breath, and then continued: "Mr. Clevering tells me that you urged his coming. What made you do that without consulting me? What made you, I say?"

"I di—di—didn't know that you knew him," stammered Crouch.

"You didn't, hey? You didn't? Well, you know it now, you old fool!" he fairly hissed, as he shook his fist in his companion's face. "And

what's more, you know me, and you know I've got you where I want you. You never perjured yourself, did you? You never took usurious interest, did you? You never helped Gorgan to skip the town by hiding him in your house that night, did you? Now it's up to you to get that man out of this place, and do it quick. Do you hear? And don't you mention my name to any one in connection with this matter either."

Crouch nodded his assent, but made no reply, and Bowman stared at him in silence for a moment, then drew his hand significantly across his neck and walked off.

The moment the young lawyer left him, Mr. Crouch walked down an intersecting street and went at once to Mr. Rhyder's house, where Mr. Scantlebecker was being entertained. Asking to see the minister, he took him aside, and, without any explanation, ordered him to plead illness or some other excuse, and leave Rutherford that afternoon and never return.

The man was surprised at this sudden change in his friend's attitude, and demanded a reason, which was promptly refused, so he packed his suit case and started at once for

Newkirk City, leaving the church without a supply for the evening.

The next Friday news came from Cranston that Mr. Osborn would be discharged from the hospital in about a fortnight. Also that his assailant had been arrested, but, at the minister's request, had been released.

It was learned later that Mr. Osborn not only secured Dan Hotten's release, but that he had also sent for him and, after a long talk, had secured from the man the promise that if he could obtain steady work he would give up drinking and care for his family. Relying on this pledge, the minister had written to a friend in the mountains and secured employment for him as a woodcutter.

When Mr. Osborn returned to Rutherford he was so weak and his nerves were so shattered that his church insisted that he should not attempt to preach until autumn. In obedience to the wishes of his people, he and his mother went to the little village of Greenville in the Stonekill valley, near the forest where Dan Hotten had been employed.

There, reading and resting, he slowly regained his strength. When the weather was

warm he would lie under the overhanging branches of the great trees and watch the squirrels as they leaped from limb to limb or swung themselves across the arching green, and would coax them to his side with nuts; or he would find some shaded nook where he could sit and listen to a story of modern life and daring that his mother had selected from the village library. When the air was cool and pleasant, he would climb to Dan Hotten's camp to talk to and encourage him, or would sit on some overhanging cliff and watch the shimmering waters of the Stonekill as they flowed in and out among the trees and circled the little village at his feet.

Every Sunday he saw the woodcutter and his son Lemuel at the village church. It was not the preaching that attracted the man, but rather a desire to see his new friend and benefactor, and secure from him a word of approval and encouragement.

Days and weeks passed; and gradually Mr. Osborn felt fresh life coursing through his veins and new energy coming to his frame. Long before he was able to return he wanted to be back in Rutherford among his people.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CRIPPLED SAINT.

While not strong enough to render any aid to the pastor of the Greenville church, Mr. Osborn was a regular attendant on the Sunday morning service, and became so well acquainted with the people that he frequently stopped at their homes on his rambles, when he was always received with large-hearted hospitality.

Among those whom he met every Sabbath was a cripple by the name of Abel Southgate, who occupied a front seat and was always very attentive to the preaching. The congregation knew when he entered by the thumping of his cane. When the sound of his stick was heard on the vestibule floor, Mr. Osborn would look around that he might catch sight of the man's face as he went to his seat, for there was a radiance about it that told of inner hope and joy, and that made him think of the glory that il-

lumined the countenance of Moses when he came down from the Mount.

The pastor declared that Abel Southgate's influence was more deeply felt in the community than that of all his other church members combined, that to know him was an inspiration, and to converse with him was a benediction.

He lived up on the mountainside, a long distance from the church, and would have been unable to attend public worship had it not been for the kind offices of a neighbor, who stopped at his door and invited him to a seat by his side every Sunday morning as he drove down the steep logging road to the Sabbath service.

One day the village minister told Mr. Osborn the story of the cripple's life; how he was born in affluence, and had lost his money through the dishonesty of others, and had heroically set to work earning his living as best he could. Meeting with an accident, he had been maimed for life, and was driven to Greenville by poverty and an opportunity to ply the trade of cobbling and making door mats. Losing his wife during an epidemic, he went to live with a friend on the mountainside, where he opened a little

booth for the sale of confectionery and souvenirs for summer guests and visitors. There, surrounded by the great pine trees, he sold his wares, communed with God and preached the gospel of hope by his saintly life and words of comfort and encouragement.

Hearing the story, Mr. Osborn determined to visit the man, and learn if he could the secret of his wonderful spiritual power. So one bright, clear day he left his mother with a neighbor and set out to find the man's home. Climbing the steep ascent by a narrow, rugged footpath, to avoid the wagon route, he at last came to the cabin. It was on the main road near a waterfall that was frequently visited by tourists, and encircled in the rear by a grove of giant pines that cast their sombre shadows over the place in quiet protectiveness.

As he drew near he saw Abel sitting on a bed of moss near his booth, his back resting against a great rock. The open Bible lay on his lap, and Osborn could see that he was tracing the lines with his finger as he read and moving his lips as though engaged in conversation. He learned afterwards that the inspired volume was to the cripple a kind of *scala sancta* on

which he mounted heavenward, lifted at one moment by a divine promise and at another by a note of praise. Reading and praying, he climbed the sacred stairway until his soul dwelt in heavenly places and he was able to commune with the unseen. "The groves were God's first temples," and the saint, bereft of all that earth held dear, had learned how to worship in the holy house.

Mr. Osborn had drawn very near before his presence was known. A branch broken beneath his feet caused the cripple to look up; then a smile illumined his features, and, resting on his cane and bracing himself against the rock, he raised himself to his feet with difficulty.

Mr. Osborn called and asked him to remain seated, but he only nodded graciously in return, and hobbled out into the road to meet his visitor.

"Welcome, thrice welcome," he said as he grasped the minister's hand. "Welcome to my cabin, to my heart and to my fellowship. How good of you to climb that rugged way to see an old man like me."

"And how good of you to give me such a

royal greeting," returned Mr. Osborn. "I'm sorry that you rose from your comfortable seat on the moss. Come, let me help you back, and I will sit there beside you; it is cool and shady by the rock. No better place could be found for a friendly chat."

He took hold of the young man's arm, and, leaning on his cane, returned to his seat.

"Abel," said Mr. Osborn, after they had talked for some time on matters of general interest, "I want to ask you a question. There is a godly woman in Rutherford who is a member of my church. She is one of the most devout and earnest Christians that I ever knew. One time, in conversation with her, she told me that spiritual experiences of peace and power could not be obtained by prayer and should not therefore be sought in that way, that such experiences were really not obtainments at all, but rather gifts bestowed without the asking and possessed by every one who received Christ in his fulness. Then she quoted Scripture to prove her point, and I was not able to controvert her statement, yet I felt that she could not be wholly right."

"Yes, wholly right," he answered, "and you

will find it so, but if she said no more, she showed you the celestial city without opening the gate thereof."

"The gate," observed Mr. Osborn, as though speaking to himself, "what can the gate be?"

"The Sadducees came to Jesus with the question, 'Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?' " he continued, "and the Master, in his answer, declared that God was not the God of the dead, but of the living. Most of us do not believe that, and there is where all the trouble lies. We believe that God is only the God of those who are dead, and have entered into celestial life; but He is our Father and His Son is our Brother beloved, the living, loving Christ of living, loving men. God says to us, through Him, as He said to Moses through the Angel in the flame of fire, 'I am that I am. I will be with thee. Go, I will teach thee what thou shalt say.' Yes, she was right; we need to possess him and him alone, but we can never possess him until we first realize that he is actually near us waiting to be possessed. 'Lo! I am with you alway.' Can we doubt His word?"

There was silence for a few moments. "Go

on," said Mr. Osborn, "explain the matter fully to me."

"No," returned the man, "I cannot; realization alone furnishes a full explanation. Nicodemus once wanted an explanation of that great mystery, regeneration, but Jesus never gratified his wish. He knew that understanding came by experience and not by words. He therefore pointed out the way and called upon the ruler to look and live. There are but three steps by which the Christian can become a true Christman; the first is by a receiving faith that claims Jesus as an Almighty Saviour; the second is by an abiding faith that retains Him as an ever present friend and counselor, and the third is by a submissive faith that lets Him do His will in and through the life."

"Then you count it all of faith," said Mr. Osborn.

"All of faith," repeated the cripple. "By faith in an unseen but living God, whose presence was vividly realized in the past, men subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, and out of weakness were made strong. By that same realizing faith in the unseen but living Christ, we may hear a

heavenly voice speaking through the pages of the Bible, giving us direction and help. By that same realizing faith in the unseen but living Christ, we may lay hold of the arm that is mighty to save and find deliverance from doubts and fears and sins. By that same realizing faith in the unseen but living Christ, we may speak to others, and our words will take hold of their consciences and wills in regenerating and sanctifying power. By that same realizing faith in the unseen but living Christ, we may find comfort in our troubles, and feel the throbbing of the divine Father's compassionate heart. By that same realizing faith in the unseen but living Christ we may commune with heaven and find our souls filled with a peace that passes all understanding and that causes our lives to be enwrapped with love and hope, as the odor of the pine trees enwraps the place where we are now sitting."

They talked on for a long time. Mr. Osborn asked many questions, and Abel Southgate answered them by quoting God's promises and repeating the story of his own experiences.

When the young minister arose to go, the cripple hobbled down the road with him until

the path became too steep, then he grasped his visitor's hand and bade him farewell.

"A Christman! A Christman!" Osborn said exultantly, as he picked his way over the fallen trees and rocks. "Is it really possible? Yes, but only by realizing faith that is defined and illustrated in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Strange I never understood it before. He lives! He lives! I believe, therefore I know."

Mr. Osborn spent much of the next week in prayer and in reviewing the words of his mountain friend. As he went about claiming the promises of God, and seeking to realize the presence of a living Christ, he found his mind grow strangely restful, a quiet peace stole over his spirit, and his vision of duty seemed more clear and commanding. The simple confidence, buoyant hope, winning cheerfulness and abounding love that was manifest in all he did was noticed by his mother, who easily drew from him the account of Abel Southgate's teaching.

Soon he sought to interest the cripple in Dan Hotten. Together they prayed for the wood-cutter and his two boys, but it was not for a

year that their prayers were answered, when the strong man and his sons bowed their hearts to the rule of Christ.

The Sabbath before Mr. Osborn had arranged to return home he went to church, expecting to meet the pastor and tell him of his intended departure, but he was away at a church conference and a stranger occupied the pulpit.

Disappointed at not seeing the regular minister, he settled himself in his pew with the determination that, whatever the message might be, he would find in it some spiritual help.

The preacher was a young man with rather a pleasing manner, who held the attention of the people by his illustrations and bright sayings, but he lacked heart power, and gave the impression that he was seeking to entertain rather than instruct, or inspire, his hearers.

At the close of the service Mr. Osborn went forward to greet him.

"I do not know your name," he said, on grasping the minister's hand, "but being myself a clergyman I thought that I should like to meet you."

"Ah! yes," said the young man. "My name is Scantlebecker, and yours is——?"

"Osborn," he returned, and then the memory of Mr. Truesdale's words came to him. "I am from Rutherford. I believe that you preached in my church one Sunday when I was ill."

The young man was evidently embarrassed, for he cleared his throat and stammered, then a gleam of anger flashed in his eyes, as he said:

"Yes, I did, and I think that I might have occupied the pulpit during the whole period of your illness had it not been for the machinations of some one whom I suspect didn't just care to have me there."

"Indeed!" returned Mr. Osborn in surprise.

"Yes, and I don't mind telling you who it was. He came into church that morning and when he saw me in the pulpit he left, but I caught sight of him in the vestibule. Mark my word," and he shook his finger in certification of his purpose, "if ever I have a chance I'll get even with Oswald Bowman. He can't turn me down that way and not feel my toes on his shins. I didn't know what had become of him until that Sunday morning. We read law together in old Truesdale's office. That was be-

fore I studied for the ministry. Then he left town, and never told any one where he was going. I know him, and I'll get even with him; see if I don't. I'd never said a word if he hadn't bounced me there in Rutherford. I knew he was back of it when I got my orders to go."

"You must remember," said Mr. Osborn, "that Mr. Bowman is one of my parishioners. You are speaking to his pastor."

"He is, hey!" the man replied. "A church member! Worse and worse! The hypocrite! Well, I hope all your church members are not like him, that's all." Then, taking hold of the lapel of Mr. Osborn's coat, he asked, "Who's the girl that he's courting?"

"You mean Miss Clevering. He's engaged to her," Osborn answered.

"Clevering! Clevering! Maud Clevering! By Jove!" he exclaimed in great excitement. Did he rope it in on that Clevering girl? He's got nerve enough to court a queen. If I don't let her know what Os. Bowman's up to, then my name isn't Scantlebecker."

Mr. Osborn had no confidence in Mr. Bowman. He had felt sure for a long time that the

lawyer was not sincere in his profession of religion, and that his engagement to Miss Clevering was for some selfish motive; and while he did not approve of Mr. Scantlebecker's vindictive spirit, he felt a secret pleasure in the thought that something might be done to break off the engagement.

"Sit down," said Mr. Scantlebecker. "I want to tell you something."

Every one had left the church but Mrs. Osborn, who was in the vestibule talking to the sexton and waiting for her son.

The two men seated themselves in the front pew and Mr. Scantlebecker began:

"Bowman and I read law together in old Truesdale's office, as I told you. Well, Truesdale's specialty was drawing wills. In that way he had made himself executor of I don't know how many estates. I'll say this much for him—if he was sharp, he was honest. No man could ever charge him with taking a dollar that didn't belong to him. Of course, Bowman and I heard a good deal in the office about legacies and such matters. The Clevering estate was one of the largest old Truesdale ever had anything to do with. It footed up over eight hun-

dred thousand dollars. It must be a million now. Rufus Clevering had two brothers, who with him shared a life interest in the estate. His older brother, John, was the only one that was married, but he had no children, so that, eventually, Maud and Ruth, being the only grandchildren, would receive the entire fortune. Os. Bowman knew this. We used to talk it over sometimes, and he'd always bring it in some way that the fellow who married one of those girls would be a lucky dog. I never thought that he was planning to do it himself, but I'm on to him now, and, by Jove, if she takes him, she'll do it with her eyes open."

Mr. Osborn could say nothing, so he arose, and, bidding the man farewell, joined his mother.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRANSFORMED MINISTER.

There was great rejoicing in Rutherford when Mr. Osborn returned. The parsonage had been renovated from top to bottom. A delegation of people from each of the societies in the church met him in Cranston at the railway station. Sam Runkel harnessed his new span of horses to his best carriage and drove up to the car platform a full half-hour before the arrival of the train. He was never happier than when he helped Mrs. Osborn and her son into his vehicle and started on his way home.

A reception was tendered the minister in Mr. Clevering's house during the week. All the church people were present, besides many invited guests. Mr. Bowman was unusually animated and jubilant, on account of his anticipated marriage, which was to take place in two weeks. So soon as he caught sight of Mr. Osborn, his face lighted up and he hurried for-

ward and greeted him with great effusiveness; then he turned and laughed and joked with the young people, but in all his gaiety he never forgot to keep a constant watch over Miss Clevering, to whom he paid marked attention.

"I tell you," said Mr. Crouch, pressing his way through the group of admirers that surrounded the minister, "I tell you, dominie, we're lucky enough to get you home again. No, I won't call it luck, for I believe that that word is not considered quite orthodox in these days. I'll change my statement and say that it's a Providence you have returned just as you have, in time to tie the knot for our two young people. Don't you say so, Brother Clevering? Ha! ha! ha! But I hope that the dominie has learned a lesson from last winter's experience, and won't go preaching on any street corners before the ceremony; because if he does, he may be in the hospital when he's wanted in the church. Ha! ha! ha!"

The thought of performing the ceremony that would make Miss Clevering the wife of Mr. Bowman caused Mr. Osborn to set his lips as though in refusal, then he remembered Mr.

Scantlebecker's threat, and wondered if anything would come of it.

When Mr. and Mrs. Gaddis came forward the minister knew in a moment that the man had remained true to Christ, and that the two were rejoicing in the fellowship of the Gospel. Mr. Gaddis seemed almost like a boy, so buoyant were his spirits and so bright was his smile, as he stretched out both of his hands and grasped those of his pastor with cordiality and warmth; while Mrs. Gaddis' face became radiant with a pleasure that was born of inward peace.

"Oh, Mr. Osborn, how glad I am to see you," exclaimed Mrs. Cherpín. "It's just splendid to have you back with us again. Do you know, we've all been as doleful as we could be while you were away; you'd a thought that the church was a regular Arcadia by the long faces that were seen every Sunday. But now Niobe reigns supreme again, and we are happy."

"Ah—a, fine, very fine," agreed Mr. Cherpín. He would have added to his statement had it not been for Mrs. Bubble, who came bustling forward in her impetuous way, and

laughingly asked Mr. Osborn how he liked the new papering in the parsonage.

"Mr. Bubble and I think that it's just too lovely for anything," she declared. "Mr. Hartwell took a great deal of pains selecting the patterns, and hired the very best desecrator that he could find in all Cranston."

"Do you remember the last time that we had the house done over?" inquired Mrs. Conover. "It was before Mr. Osborn came. Mr. Taller was with us then. He went away on one of his vacations, and we——"

"I should think I did remember," interrupted Mrs. Rhyder, in a loud voice. "I knew when he returned he was all put out over the changes that had been made in the front bedroom, but he couldn't say anything. Just think of it, yellow stripes with a purple border. I don't wonder that it grated on his sense of the fitness of things."

Others presented themselves, and Mr. Osborn was kept very busy the next half hour shaking hands, answering questions, and listening to words of welcome and good fellowship.

When every one had assured him of the pleasure that was felt in having him back in

Rutherford, refreshments were served and more friendly talk ensued. Finally, the people consulted their watches, and there was a general movement toward the cloak room.

Many of the minister's friends had noticed, on meeting him since his return, and at the reception, that he did not appear the same as when he left town in the early spring. A change had taken place in his demeanor and expression, and they frequently turned to look at him, or listen to his remarks, wondering what it was that made him different. There was no regret mingled with their perplexity, for they felt drawn to him as never before by some invisible influence. His old-time cheerfulness remained, but it was clothed with a winning grace that gave a charm to his presence. His forehead was as high and shapely as ever, but the furrows of care and anxiety had all disappeared. His eyes had lost their old brooding look, that told of mental depression and gloomy foreboding, and the nervous hesitancy that had so often showed itself in conversation was gone, and a quiet assurance had taken its place. There was a new manliness and nobility in his bearing that commanded respect and con-

fidence. Mr. Osborn had left Rutherford a heart-sick and worried pastor, uncertain as to duty, and kept in constant perplexity by a sensitive conscience. He had returned a stalwart servant of Jesus Christ.

There is a tree on the walls of the old city of Canton that shows vitality in branch and twig and leaf, but its trunk is hollow and its life is nearly spent. Another tree has made its appearance within the old outer shell of wood and bark, and has reached upward and spread outward until the time is close at hand when the sapling grown will break through all barriers and be itself supreme.

By a faith that was the evidence of things not seen, Mr. Osborn came to possess God. Through the realized presence of a living Christ, a new divine life grew and strengthened within his soul. Men saw that he had been transformed by the renewing of his mind, and honored him as one under the control of Heaven.

If the members of the church were surprised and pleased at the change that had taken place in their pastor, they marveled when they heard him preach. The old nervous tension and con-

stant effort to hold and interest the congregation was gone. Flights of oratory and emotional pleadings gave place to direct manly talk. At times he became eloquent, but it was only when he let his heart flow into the hearts of his hearers, making them one with him in thought and purpose. His complete abandonment of all traditional pulpit tones and expressions at first startled them, then riveted their attention. Men, women, and even children, listened as to one who had a real message, and when the services were over they went home with a deepened sense of personal responsibility and longing for God.

From the first Sunday after Mr. Osborn's return a new impulse took possession of the people. Social gatherings and schemes that furthered Christian fellowship were continued, but dependence on extraneous methods for financial support and religious work were spontaneously abandoned, and the church became at once a center of beneficent influence and spiritual power.

Throngs gathered at the Sunday and week night services, and listened attentively to the Word spoken, and then went away to lead bet-

ter lives. Faith took the place of doubt, hope of fear and love of uncharitableness.

There was no need of outside help to bring about a revival, for the people were already revived. With a new wish came a new life, and with the new life a pervading spirit of evangelism.

The day after the reception Mr. Bowman called on Mr. Osborn and asked him to perform the marriage ceremony that would unite him to Miss Clevering for life. He was very happy, and dwelt at length on his own good fortune in securing so estimable a young woman for a bride.

Mr. Osborn listened to his words as one in a dream; a cloud rested on his spirits for the first time since he had entered into his new experience. It lasted but for a brief period, for, staying his heart in faith on an unseen Christ, and longing for comfort and direction, he found help. Again he was in the sunlight of the divine presence.

When the young lawyer had secured a favorable response to his request, he left the house, and the minister, after a season of communion with God, went to see Elder Root. He felt

that the time had come when it was his duty to make known what he had heard concerning Oswald Bowman.

The old man heard the story of the lawyer's hypocrisy, and volunteered to call at once on Mr. Clevering, and warn him against giving his consent to the marriage.

"Father Root," said Mr. Clevering, when his friend had communicated the object of his errand, "your words but add to my grief. I have had no confidence in the young man for a long time, but I am helpless to prevent the union. Maud will listen to nothing that is said against Oswald. Her reply to my warnings is always the same. 'He is a member of the church,' she declares, 'an active Christian, kind and considerate to every one, and has never deceived me in any way. How could I therefore be so heartless and cruel as to doubt him at the last moment because of idle gossip?' You can judge for yourself how she feels, when I tell you that, only this morning, I handed her a letter that reflected on Bowman's motives and she would not read it. Glancing at the first paragraph, she indignantly tore it in pieces and flung it in the waste basket. True, the letter

was unsigned, but it came from some one in Newkirk City, who seemed to have known Oswald when he was a law student in Mr. Truesdale's office. It was a very severe denunciation, and while I do not generally approve of paying any attention to anonymous meddlers, I felt that the charges were sufficiently definite to call for investigation. But what is the use? Maud is not in love with Oswald, she's only infatuated. I feel sure that could she be made to see that he is not what he appears she would spurn him at once, but it's too late, too late; I can only await results. The invitations are out. Poor child! I would rather see her lying in her coffin than give her away to that man next Wednesday." Having thus expressed himself, Mr. Clevering covered his face and turned toward the mantel.

He little thought that, at the very moment when he was pouring out his grief to Elder Root, his daughter was upstairs engaged in picking the torn pieces of Mr. Scantlebecker's communication from the waste basket and fitting the parts together.

Slowly and laboriously she matched the letters and uneven edges until, at last, every frag-

ment was in its proper place and spread on the table. Then she began reading. "He's working a scheme to get your money." "It's false!" she declared. "It's absolutely false! He doesn't know that I have any expectancy whatever. It's all a lie. How should he find out, I should like to know? "When he was reading law in Mr. Truesdale's office." "Reading law in Mr. Truesdale's office! The idea! He never read law in Mr. Truesdale's office or he would have told me. It's a scandalous attempt to injure Oswald. He doesn't even dare to sign his name. I won't believe a word of it. I won't. Oswald may not be a pious sentimentalist, but he's a true Christian, and he loves me. It's all a lie, and I'll marry him in spite of every one," and she angrily swept the pieces back into the basket.

Then she walked across the room and, drawing a rocker up by the window, opened a book, but instead of reading continued to commune with herself.

"I wonder what's got into every one?" she asked. "I don't like to have people look as though I was going to my own funeral, and insinuate that Oswald Bowman isn't what he

pretends to be. I should think that I ought to know him better than any one else. I wouldn't care for all that was said if it wasn't for father. They've worked him up so that he's almost frantic over my marriage. He told me yesterday that I didn't really love the man I intended to marry. I wonder how he knows? He doesn't realize that it isn't my nature to be billing and cooing all the time, and Oswald doesn't care to be coddled. Suppose that I don't love him, what of it? I like him and respect him, and when people have interests in common that often grows into love. Besides, I've promised, and I won't go back on my promise unless I have positive proof that he is deceiving me. It's too late now any way, the day is set and the invitations are out."

Having thus expressed her views, she looked steadily at her book for a long time, but did not turn a leaf. Then she flung the volume back on the table and remarked in an irritated tone of voice, "I wish that I'd never met that Mr. Osborn."

The next moment she was bending over the waste paper basket again picking out the fragments of Mr. Scantlebecker's letter.

Elder Root left Mr. Clevering's house with depressed spirits, and went at once to the parsonage, to report the failure of his mission.

"It's of no use," he said. "Maud is simply infatuated, and absolutely refuses to believe anything."

"Father Root," returned the minister: "we've done all that we can, now we must pray. Some way God will make the path plain before her. I know not how."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REHEARSAL.

"Good afternoon, preacher," Sam Runkle called out, as he noticed Mr. Osborn's form silhouetted against the brightness that came through the stable door. "Don't stand there like a wooden soldier. Come in and sit down. I'll be through ileing this harness in a minute and can talk to yer."

Mr. Osborn entered, and Sam asked: "I suppose yer've come to inquire whether I've heard the news? Ye-s, I have. It's town talk by this time."

"What news?" the minister demanded, as he reached out his hand to grasp that of the liveryman.

"'Firstly, secondly, thirdly,' that's what the preachers say," returned Sam. "Firstly, I heard that the Reverend John Osborn of Ruth-erford has received a call to a regular peacock-

struttin' church in a big city, an', seein' as the premium is double what it is here, it's likely to be regarded as a cle-ar call of the Lord; but it's my opinion that it's more likely to be the voice of Shekels the Goldsmith, than that of the Almighty. Secondly, I he-ard that Ed. Greaves has got a pardon, bein' more sinned against than sinnin', an' is comin' home; but it's my opinion that in-stead of his goin' to his mother he'd better stand outside the prison wall and wa-it for his mother to go to him. Then they can both travel off together where they're not known and start life all over. Thirdly, I he-ard that Os. Bowman has actually jerked in his line and cotched his fish, an' that the Reverend John Osborn is a-goin' to take it off the hook for him, and throw it inter the basket, but it's my opinion that if I were asked to do the job, I-ed let the fish slip through my fingers, if I could, and give the helpless little critter a chance to git back inter the water. Thar, that's the end of my sermon. Amen! Why don't yer sit down, preacher?"

Mr. Osborn laughed and then went over to the bench indicated by the liveryman. "I've heard the same news that you have," he re-

marked. "As far as the call is concerned, I think that in most cases you can lay it down as a rule that the larger the salary the larger the church, and the greater the ability of the people to extend their work, and the larger the church and ability of the members the larger the opportunity for service, so that a minister should think very seriously before refusing a call that seems to promise greater usefulness, but in this particular case my views coincide with yours, and I have put a letter in the Post Office saying that my work in Rutherford is not yet done and I must decline the call. As for Greaves, he is not coming home. I have found a place for him to work in the mountains, chopping wood. It is near Greenville, where he will come under good influences. His mother will settle up her affairs at once and go out there and make a home for him. As for Bowman's piscatorial pursuits, I see no prospects of the fish getting back into the water."

Sam chuckled at the prospect of Mr. Osborn's remaining in Rutherford, and remarked: "See-in' as yer took my advice before I gave it, I'll tell you another bit of news that ain't got any advice tacked on behind. I he-ard that the

money lender says that yer to-o much for him, and when Os. Bowman is married he won't have any more use for the church an' is a-goin' to leave. I know his goin' will make yer feel awe-ful sorry fer—the other church an' the new dominie that'll have to preach to him, but then yer got ter have yer tribulations like other folks."

"I'd rather have him stay and do right," returned Mr. Osborn.

"I know yer would," Sam answered, "but then yer can't. He-'s goin' sure. Yer won't kick yer legs out when he pulls the string, a-n' the brothers a-n' sisters, as he calls 'em, don't turn the corners when he jerks on the rein, a-n' he don't like it. As to his bein' converted, I rea-d onst about a man in India who had to sleep se-ven years on iron spikes to make merit for breaking the law. By the time the five years was up his skin was as tough as a rhinoceros' hide, an' he liked it better 'an sleep-in' on soft mats. 'Spikes,' he said, 'wa-s softer 'an swan's down,' and that's what I think is the matter with the banker; there ain't any spikes in your church for him to lie down on, an' as he ha-s to have 'em for comfort, he an'

his wife are goin' to find some place where they tie bayonets in bundles an' stack 'em up fer beds, an' yer can't blame him, fer if a church isn't any comfort to a man, wha-t's the good of his stayin' in it? Some folks are s-o used to misery, that they're not happy 'less they're miserable."

True to Sam's statement, Mr. and Mrs. Crouch soon asked for their letters, and connected themselves with another church, where Mr. Crouch criticised the minister severely, and finally secured sufficient influence to compel his resignation from the pastorate. Then the money lender interested himself in the question of renting sittings in the House of God, and insisted on free pews so strongly that when a vote was taken the membership was divided. Bitter words ensued. Party was ranged against party. Leading one of the factions, he went off and organized a new church in a public hall. The enterprise had a struggling existence for a few years. Then there were discords among the attendants. Some of the most active lost their interest and withdrew, and the enterprise was abandoned. Neither Mr. Crouch nor his wife ever associated themselves

with a church again, but contented themselves with an occasional attendance on Sabbath services. Not considering himself a professing Christian, the money lender felt at liberty to criticise ministers and characterize all religious organizations as "nests of hypocrites."

The only subject that filled the minds of the people of Rutherford at this time was the approaching wedding. Mr. Clevering was loth to have Maud leave home, on the ground that she could be more comfortable in his house than in any other place, and that both he and her younger sister needed her. So it was finally arranged to have Mr. Bowman take up his abode in Mr. Clevering's homestead.

The lawyer did not at first like this arrangement, as he was afraid that his father-in-law might discover his intentions with regard to Maud's inheritance, but being assured of his own powers of deception, he felt that, by a little tactfulness, he could "pull the wool over the old man's eyes," as he declared, and in time secure his good will and confidence. "He cannot live over three years," he affirmed to himself. "During that time I will have the satisfaction of seeing him go into his dotage. Maud now

trusts me absolutely, and, with her father's favorable regard, which must surely come, I shall be able to secure Ruth's confidence, and so control the whole estate, which will be much better than working in a law office and leading a dog's life for a living."

With his mind filled with such thoughts, he went about the streets with a beaming face and received the congratulations of his friends with a heartiness that was quite unusual with him.

Elated with his prospects in life, he hurried to the church on the evening that was to precede the wedding, that he might take his part with others in the rehearsal that had been planned by Miss Clevering.

Quite a company had assembled in the back of the auditorium, and were laughing and talking about the coming event when he entered. At once they raised a shout of welcome, and repeated the words of good-natured raillery that they had spoken in his absence.

"You can laugh all you please," he said, but wait until after to-morrow, when you see how happy Maud and I are you'll all want to be married. I suspect our example will be followed by a lot of you before a year's up."

Just at that moment Mr. Osborn entered with his mother. Miss Clevering immediately gathered her attendants about her, and stated her plans and arrangements. Then she gave directions as to the entrance and positions of those who were to accompany her at the ceremony.

Ethel Root had been selected as maid of honor; Leonora Treadwell and Ruth Clevering, who were considered too young to assume the more responsible position, were asked to act as bridesmaids. Mr. Bowman had secured Raymond Hazzard as his best man, and Rufus Timer and Robert Knibbs, with several others, as ushers.

Each of the young people took the place, and performed the duties that were assigned to him, entering and standing as he was directed.

"I think we all know our parts now," said Miss Clevering, "but to make sure, let's us go through it once more, if we can have the music. The organist turned in her seat, and was about to play the wedding march for the fifth time, when Ruth turned to her sister, and said:

"Oh, Maud; I almost forgot to give you this

letter. It came in the last delivery, and I brought it over, thinking that it might have something to do with the rehearsal."

Miss Clevering took the letter. It was addressed to her. The handwriting she at once recognized as the same that inscribed the anonymous communication that was sent to her father, and it was postmarked from the same place. The keen interest that she had taken in the proceedings of the evening was at once gone. The young people went through their parts, but she was indifferent to their errors of position, and hesitated when asked for advice. Several who were present noticed that she trembled when she walked, and that her face had grown very white.

As the company left the church Mr. Clevering called Ruth aside, and asked her what it was that she had given her sister. Being told that it was a letter that was postmarked from Newkirk City, he set his lips and shook his head as though the answer had started a train of disagreeable thoughts.

On reaching home, Miss Clevering went at once to the kitchen, and, taking the lid off the

range, said, "It's too late now," and threw Mr. Scantlebecker's second epistle into the fire.

"What's too late?" the maid asked, as she saw the red blaze.

"Nothing," returned the girl, "nothing." At last the flame died down, and she spread the curled and blackened cinders with the lid lifter, and went to her room. There she began disrobing for bed, but her mind was in a turmoil, and she scarcely knew what she did. "It's too late," she repeated, "it's too late. He's never deceived me, and I'll trust him in the face of the whole world. A Christian man cannot be a deceiver. To-morrow at this time I will be his wife. Love or no love, nothing now but death shall part us."

There was little rest for her that night. Rolling and tossing on her bed, she fell into fitful slumbers. Wild dreams floated through her mind. Sometimes she would start in her sleep as though about to escape from an impending catastrophe. Had any one been in the room they might have heard her moan at times the name of her betrothed and that of her pastor.

There were others that spent the hours of darkness in wakefulness or disturbed repose.

Mr. Bowman was restless, but very happy. In his half-conscious moments he seemed to himself to be living in a large and imposing house, and surrounded by every luxury that money could buy. Sometimes he laughed aloud in his sleep, and almost shouted for joy. Then he came to himself, and found that he was sitting up in bed, and immediately threw himself back on his pillow again to give loose rein to his pleasant imaginings.

Mr. Clevering spent most of the night in pacing his room and moaning aloud, "My poor, blind child! My poor, blind child!" and praying for deliverance, but seeing no way by which deliverance could come.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILT THOU HAVE THIS MAN?

Shadows and sunshine chased each other over the trees and housetops of Rutherford on the day set apart for Maud Clevering's wedding. As the hour for the ceremony drew near, it was noticeable throughout the village that something of unusual interest was about to take place, for the streets, usually very quiet, were astir with life. Scores of men and women, dressed in their Sunday attire, were to be seen coming from all quarters of the town and moving, as by one impulse, toward the principal thoroughfare, on which Mr. Osborn's church was located.

Carriages whirled backward and forward from the meeting-house to the homes of the people with a celerity that indicated that they were being used for business of unusual moment. The drivers, sitting on their high seats,

or comfortably cornered on soft cushions, held themselves bolt upright, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, as though conscious of their importance and of the weighty responsibilities resting on their shoulders.

John Rhyder, with his wife and daughter, left his home three-quarters of an hour in advance of the time set for the wedding. Calling for Mr. and Mrs. Treadwell, he proceeded on his way to the church, chatting with one and another as pleasantly as he felt was consistent with the dignity of the occasion.

Laura Saunders and Miss Bruding, in evident determination not to be outdone by others, had also started early, and were standing before the church full fifteen minutes before the doors were open.

Sam Runkle would have taken his wife in his new carriage, had it not been hired by others. As it was, he walked along with a doleful countenance, in token of the fact that he disapproved of the whole proceeding.

Mrs. Bubble, who was more showily dressed than any one else, almost ran, in her efforts to keep up with her husband; but she did not succeed, for, always a step in advance, he hurried

along, looking back every few moments to admire her appearance and urge her to hurry.

“Oh, isn’t this grand?” she exclaimed, between her pantings, as she came into the main street and saw a number of her friends on their way to the church. “Don’t you remember, Oliver, the day that we were married, how it threatened rain all the morning, and how beautifully it cleared off just in time? Oh, I do like weddings so much? You remember, we had three railroad maggots—no, that’s not the word, but never mind—and one grubernational candy, candy date there, and how particular father was to keep out all who he said were partveneers and all that. Oh, it’s grand!” and she rattled on, panting and explaining.

Dr. Brancher had waited until the last moment, much to his wife’s annoyance, and then insisted on calling for Mr. and Mrs. Conover, who, he found, had left the house some time before. As they turned away, a carriage containing Mr. and Mrs. Hartwell whirled by. It was on its way to the parsonage to get Mrs. Osborn. Behind the carriage was another that was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Crouch.

Mrs. Cherpin, who consumed two hours in

dressings and fidgeting, and who paused every few moments in her preparations to charge her husband with being as slow as a Harlequin, at last succeeded in getting him started, and they hurried together to the very steps of the building.

The bridal party, with the exception of Mr. Clevering and his daughters, were at the church promptly, and went into the basement, there to await the coming of the bride. Mr. Bowman shut himself in a choir room back of the organ, where there was a small window, and where he could look out on the street.

The building was filled to overflowing long before the time. The organist was in his place and began playing. Every few moments he nervously turned his head, as if he were anxiously waiting for some signal that would indicate the arrival of the Clevering carriage. The ushers stood by the doors, keeping a passage open.

Mr. Osborn sat quietly in the corner of the Sunday School room, trying to divert his mind by reading, but only glanced at the pages of the book that he held in his hand. He felt that he was about to unite the life of the truest, no-

blest young woman in the world, one whom he had once loved, and who would ever be his friend, with the most insincere and selfish man that he had ever met.

He had spent many hours in prayer over the matter, and felt calm and restful, but sad about Maud's unhappy prospects. He was sure that in some way God would overrule the marriage for good.

The hands of the clock slowly passed the time appointed, and began to measure off the moments of delay. Men thought of business engagements, and consulted their watches; women fidgeted in their seats and whispered to their companions. Those on the sidewalk looked up the street to catch the first sign of the expected vehicle.

Mr. Bowman, who had kept his face pressed against the pane of glass in the window for a long time, became anxious, and began to pace up and down the small room he occupied, with furrowed brow, pausing every few moments to look out on the street. As the time passed his nervousness increased, the seams in his forehead deepened, and he began muttering to himself that women were all a set of idiots about

keeping engagements. Then he shook his fist at the organ pipes, as though they were to blame for the delay, and asserted, with an oath, that when Maud became his wife, he'd teach her a lesson or two about promptness, so that she'd never forget.

Ten, twenty, thirty minutes passed, still there was no sign of the carriage. Some one went to the nearest telephone station, and called up the woman who had been left in charge of Mr. Clevering's house, and received word that the carriage had started forty-five minutes before.

Another fifteen minutes passed. Mr. Bowman's anger grew more intense, and he declared, with a perfect volley of oaths, that he would like to give Maud a piece of his mind, and pay her back for insulting all his friends and all the guests by her dilatoriness, and that when he got her in his clutches he'd make her squirm, or his name wasn't Bowman.

"I haven't played ladies' man and boot licker all these months to be set up at last for a laughing stock by a religious fanatic in skirts and frills," he declared, "and I won't stand it. After to-day I'm free from petticoat rule, and she'll know it."

He went on in this way for some time, violently charging his prospective bride with wilful delay, and inexcusable conceit, calling her father an old dolt and cad, and her sister a noodle, when suddenly wheels were heard, and he leaped to the window. Almost at the same moment Raymond Hazzard pushed open the choir-room door and called out that the Cleverings had come.

Mr. Bowman grabbed a whiskbroom, rapidly brushed his clothes, readjusted his cravat before a small looking-glass that hung on the wall, and went downstairs.

Miss Clevering was handing her wraps to an attendant when he met her. His anger had not abated, and he glared at her savagely, and shook his head, as, with an oath, he growled: "Maud, you're a fool! What does all this mean? Keeping us waiting for nearly an hour. It's an inexcusable outrage." Then he swore at her again and, turning, went downstairs and through the basement with Mr. Hazzard to meet Mr. Osborn and enter the church.

The chaplet of orange blossoms in the girl's hair, and the bouquet of bridal roses, with lilies of the valley and maidenhair fern, that she car-

ried in her hand, seemed a fitting ornament to one whose grace of manner and dignity of person was so pronounced. No bride could be more beautiful. Of medium height and perfect form, with dark auburn hair that waved back from a forehead that indicated unusual intelligence and spiritual purposes, she turned and looked at her companions. A moment before her bright and expressive features shone with the joy of her heart in the prospect of becoming the wife of a man in whom she had perfect faith; but now a cloud rested on her countenance. Her eyes filled with tears, which she held back with forced resolution. Without speaking, she turned to her father, who was to give her away, and taking his arm walked down the aisle behind her attendants.

What was it about her that caused the people to turn and gaze in astonishment. Brides are not infrequently nervous and pallid, but Maud Clevering's tread was firm. On her brow rested great drops of sweat, and there was a set look to her face as she turned her eyes appealingly toward her father. She heeded not the crowd, nor the flowers, nor the organ, from

which there rolled forth the wedding march, as step by step she neared the waiting minister.

There was a moment's silence. The music had ceased. In clear tones Mr. Osborn began his address to the people; then came his charge to the betrothed. Finally he asked:

"Oswald, wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and health, and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

He paused, and Mr. Bowman answered in a strong voice, "I will."

Then, turning to the bride, he asked: "Maud, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honor and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, as long as ye both shall live?"

There was perfect silence for a moment, then in a voice scarcely audible she answered, "I will not."

Mr. Osborn could hardly believe his senses. Had he mistaken her words, or had she misunderstood him?

A tremor of surprise, uncertainty and bewilderment passed over the congregation. The people bent forward to catch every word.

Slowly the minister repeated his question, pausing between each sentence, and waited for a reply.

During the second reading she had gained more confidence, so that when he had finished speaking, she looked directly in his face and answered in a loud, clear tone of voice, "I will not." Then she added, "Mr. Osborn, if you will accompany me to the chapel, I will explain."

Astonished beyond measure, Mr. Clevering and Mr. Bowman followed her to the Sunday School room, while the people waited in breathless suspense.

When the door was closed and they were alone, Maud turned to Mr. Osborn and said:

"Over an hour ago I started from home in a carriage, with my father and my sister. As we were driving around by the Aqueduct, the horses shied. A newspaper that had been car-

ried by the wind against a bush by the roadside frightened them. Swerving toward the railroad excavation, they become unmanageable. One of the front wheels struck a large rock, and we were nearly thrown down the embankment; indeed, the carriage did slip, and was only prevented from falling by a log that was in the way. Our driver showed a great deal of presence of mind. If it had not been for his quick action, we should probably have lost our lives. As it was, the carriage was seriously injured, and we were obliged to send for another before we could proceed. This took time, as nearly all the carriages in Rutherford had been engaged for the wedding. When we reached the church, Mr. Bowman met me in the vestibule. He had caused me to believe that he was an upright man and a sincere Christian. In that belief I consented to become his wife. His public confession of faith and activity in church work served to confirm his words. I trusted him and gave him my heart. Rumors had reached me that he was not the man that he appeared to be, but I refused to believe them. I felt that I knew him better than did his traducers. When I entered

the church with the purpose of fulfilling my pledge and becoming his wife, he met me in a towering rage and, without waiting for any explanation, he charged me with intentional delay and used language that was both abusive and insolent, calling me a fool, and cursing me with unwarranted rudeness and profanity. I was stunned by his violent language. The whole falsity of his profession was revealed in a moment. The flood-tide of love and confidence that I had given him seemed to be suddenly set back by the powers of darkness, and I shrank from him as from an enemy. I was compelled to decide on my course of action in the short time that it took to walk down the aisle. His words made marriage impossible, but it was not until you asked me whether I would become his wife that I saw my way clear, and had strength to speak. My resolution is fixed. I will never marry Mr. Bowman. Father, will you please see that my carriage is called to the side door."

"But, Maud! Maud!" Mr. Bowman exclaimed. "Surely you do not mean this. You are not in earnest. You know that I did not understand. Had you explained, it would have been all right. I know that I was hasty. I

ought not to have lost control of myself, but it is too late now to go back on your pledge. You will not disgrace me before the public, oh, I know you will not. It would be cruel."

"Father, will you please call the carriage?" she repeated firmly. Her second charge was unnecessary, for the old man had already sent a messenger.

She turned to step toward the door where the vehicle was waiting, when suddenly she paused and said: "Mr. Osborn, you will greatly oblige me by explaining matters to the guests. Say what you think best. I know that you will not make any announcement that will hurt Mr. Bowman unnecessarily, but tell the truth—tell the truth!"

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE STONEKILL VALLEY.

When Mr. Bowman saw the Clevering carriage whirl down the street, he at once entered his own vehicle and ordered his driver to follow. Arriving at the house, he asked to see Maud, but she refused to meet him, and her father, coming forward, ordered him away. Well knowing the firmness of the family, he made up his mind that it would be useless to seek reconciliation, and he went to his boarding place and changed his clothes. Then he packed his trunk and expressed it to Newkirk City.

Hurrying to Cranston, he called at an auction house and sold his office furniture. By noon the next day he had left town and was never known to return.

The whole village was in a ferment of excitement over the affair. Sam Runkle declared that it was a riddle that he could not explain,

but that Clevering's plucky daughter probably knew what she was about.

Mrs. Conover remarked that the refusal of Maud at the last moment reminded her of a similar occurrence, when a cousin of hers was taken ill on her wedding day, and that, before she had recovered, her engagement was broken.

Mrs. Cherpín could not see why Mr. Bowman should make such a Quaker of himself just before he was going to take his marriage vow, but Mr. Cherpín thought both Mr. Bowman and Miss Clevering were all right.

Mrs. Rhyder said that it was a bad match from the beginning, and that any one might expect that such a wretchedly balanced courtship would end as it did.

Mrs. Bubble declared that she never had such a trilling experience in her life than when she heard Miss Clevering say, "I will not," and her husband rejoined that he would have to confess that the girl's refusal was a great surprise to him, but he knew that in some way it would accrue to the benefit of all concerned.

Mr. Osborn and his mother said nothing. Elder Root and his friends and the members of

the Hartwell and Treadwell families were also silent.

Mr. Clevering remained in the house. Those who were near him observed that he spent much time in reading and quiet thought. He was also heard to give utterance to the expression, "Thank God! Thank God!" when walking through the halls and about the rooms.

Maud would not talk to any one on the subject, and received calls only from her most intimate friends.

In a short time Mr. Clevering took his two daughters and went abroad for the winter.

Weeks and months passed. The church grew in power and influence. A deeper, spiritual interest was manifested in every department of work. Mr. Osborn, calm, radiant and hopeful, went about his duties, loving all and beloved by all. Faithfully and simply he ministered to the people, and preached without affectation or artificial eloquence. His sermons always showed careful preparation, serious purpose and great heart power. They were as divine messages that compelled attention and action, and men and women yielded to the word as it fell from his lips.

The Son of God took possession of him in power, the preacher became a messenger, the messenger a minister, and the minister a Christman filled with the Holy Spirit.

When the winter had passed and the summer came Mrs. Osborn expressed a strong desire to spend the vacation season at Greenville. Her son was not aware that she had heard that the Clevering family were to be at the Stonekill Inn for two months before returning to Rutherford. Had he been informed of the fact, he might have hesitated before consenting to his mother's wishes, not knowing but that his motives would be misunderstood. As it was, he engaged rooms at the same hotel.

Many were the rambles in the woods and up the mountain paths that Mr. Osborn took with Miss Clevering that summer; and frequent were the talks of home and work that they had while sitting beneath the trees and beside the rippling waters of the Stonekill.

One day, a week before his return, Mr. Osborn invited Miss Clevering to climb the ragged road with him that led to the cottage and booth of Abel Southgate. After a brief visit the cripple led them to a rocky path back of the

pine trees that descended to the foot of a beautiful waterfall within a deeply shaded glen. It was a place that was frequently sought by summer visitors, and that was particularly attractive to the young minister. Assisting Miss Clevering down over the roots and stones, he finally reached the bottom of the decline, and sought out a large boulder, where they could sit together and watch the sheet of foaming water that poured over a ledge of rocks above. The constant roar of the cascade mingled with the splashing of the rapids gave a wild, sombre music to the place, and they remained silently watching the rolling foam and rising spray for a long time.

The rock on which they were seated was round and smooth, and after a time Miss Clevering found herself slipping; quickly she stretched out her hand and grasped her companion's arm. Mr. Osborn was pleased, looked down at her with a smile, and pressed her hand close to his heart. She turned her eyes toward him, and in an instant noticed that he was gazing at her with the same serious, loving, contemplative expression that he had the day he took her hand in Mrs. Greaves' house.

The blood mounted to her cheeks as then, but she did not withdraw her arm, and he pressed it closer and asked:

“Maud, won’t you let me take care of you—always?”

She made no answer, and he went on, “I have loved you for a long time.”

Still she was silent, but made no attempt to relinquish her hold.

“Maud, won’t you please tell me that I may have you for my own?” he pleaded.

She looked up at him. There was no need of an answer, for her face showed the consent of her heart.

“Come!” she said, “let us go back to the Inn.”

He climbed down from the rock and stretched out his hands to help her. She grasped them and leaped to the mossy slope below. Instead of relinquishing his hold, he drew her close to his heart. She looked up and smiled. Bending, his lips met hers, and the bondage of their hearts sealed itself in the kiss of love.



APR 9 1908

